

## A POINT OF ORDER

by Stephen A. Tyler

*The Śāstric literature of India contains a native theory about the origin and structure of caste society. This theory is examined first through those propositions which set forth the duties of castes and the proper relations between them, but because the propositions and the texts themselves portend more than a statement of proper caste relations and seek to resolve a discontinuity between revealed doctrine and everyday practice, the analysis shifts to what it is that constitutes this problem as a problem. Indologists and anthropologists alike have dismissed the native solution, but in so doing have failed to understand what really motivated it. This paper argues that the apparent problem—the existence of more castes than doctrine allowed—and the apparent solution—new castes arise through miscegenation—presuppose other more fundamental notions about the relation between cosmic and social order, and it is with reference to these, rather than the presuppositions of Indology and anthropology, that the problem and its solution must be understood.*

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Two things fill the mind with ever new and increasing admiration and awe: the starry heavens above me and the moral law within me. . . . I associate them directly with the consciousness of my own existence.

Kant

### PROLOGUE

Whether we speak in cold mathematical parables of the myths of modern science or relate those of ancient religion in symbols grown smooth and warm to the tongue through long and familiar use, still we speak a language of metaphor and only spin fables of the birth and death of the cosmos. Where we imagine a difference between the language of science and the voice of religion, the skeptic finds unity; and when we seek to abandon language altogether, seeing it as the last wedge of ignorance separating the structure of mathematics from cosmic order, he reminds us that this is

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only an ancient urge to compass the cosmos through metaphor and bend nature to analogy, that others have thought their vast, self-confirming systems of knowledge revealed the order of life in the order of the cosmos. Thus reproved, we little care if our object of analysis is a myth of modern science or of ancient religion, for we find in both the same structures of thought, the same dialectical movements, the same metaphors, and the same exalted pride that tempts us to see the order of things in the order of our language.

#### INTRODUCTION

Dharma—no word in any language more surely evokes intimations of cosmic order or so sharply awakens our slumbering sense of determinate transcendental moral obligation. Certainly our English word “law,” which we have “drawn and quartered” into the divine, the natural, the human, and the statistical, robbing it not only of its transcendence but finally of its determinateness, no longer quickens our estivating moral imagination either with insinuations of cosmic transcendence or presentiments of morality. Derived from the Sanskrit root  $\sqrt{\text{dhr}}$ , denoting “that which bears, supports, upholds or arranges,” dharma refers to the established order of things and includes in its range of meaning law, natural law, statute, decree, ordinance, usage, custom, prescribed conduct, rule, duty, right, justice, morality, virtue, religious merit, and good works. Unlike Western law, dharma brooks no division. It is the totality of law, not just religious, civil, and natural law, but whatever is “law-full,” whatever manifests order. Because all ordered things participate in dharma the laws of man are not puny human creations, they are reflections of cosmic law.

The sacred Sanskrit literature of India contains an extensive class of works devoted to dharma. Known as the Dharma Śāstras, the “science of order,” they detail the nature of the correspondence between cosmic and social order. Like those modern scientists who seek to establish harmony between the natural and social order, the ancient authors of the Dharma Śāstras were practical men. Confronted with a world of law dishonored and sacred traditions contaminated by barbarous practices, they compiled handbooks of dharma. Behind the chaos of conflicting codes and customs they saw a luminous order which enabled them to diagnose the causes of the disorder around them and to point the way to a social order reconstituted in accordance with cosmic law.

Theirs was not the neat, orderly world of revealed scripture. Where sacred doctrine spoke only of a society consisting of four hierarchically arranged social classes (varṇas)—the priestly Brāhmaṇs, the ruling or warrior Kṣatriyas, the merchant and agricultural Vaiśyas, and the laboring

Śūdras—they lived among a confusion of castes (jātis) whose names were unattested in scripture, whose origins were obscure, whose duties and obligations often conflicted, and whose hierarchic ranks were confounded. Their world had literally outgrown its scriptural classifications and they faced a taxonomic crisis.

In its most concrete form their problem was to reconcile received doctrine and social facts by aligning varṇas and jātis. Their solution was to derive the latter from the former through the mechanism of miscegenation. Children born of unions between persons of different varṇas did not become members of either parent's varṇa, but instead became founders of wholly new classes known as jātis. Their children's children might form other new jātis by similarly failing to marry in their parent's class, and so on. By the simple means of exogamous marriage the sages demonstrated the possibility of an expanding universe of jātis. They located the cause of the confusion of castes in the practice of marrying outside one's own varṇa—of failing to marry according to the law (dharma). Lapses in the performance of duty (dharma) brought on disorder (adharma).

As might be expected, much theoretical discussion in the Dharma Śāstras focuses on redefining the concept of lawful marriage, and of working out alternative consequences for unlawful ones. In this discussion the sages covertly addressed a larger problem of which the confusion of classes was only a symptom. Their real problem was to understand permanence and change, and to devise a rationale for change so that it would not threaten the social order. The problem was symbolized on the one hand by the fixed, changeless, transcendental varṇas of revealed scripture, and on the other by the growing, changing jātis of the phenomenal world. By making jātis the product of unlawful unions among members of the four varṇas they hoped not only to account for the development and growth of jātis, but more importantly to provide a mechanical method for assigning jātis their appropriate positions in the hierarchy, thereby preserving order. They accomplished this second aim by deriving the order of jāti rank from the order of varṇa rank, that is, by using the varṇa system as a homological base.

When we understand the problem in these terms we recognize it as the social reflex of a cosmological problem whose themes can be found in the earliest speculations in the Ṛg Veda and traced through the more sophisticated philosophical literature of later times. I refer here to the well-known Indra myth—a tale of combat between the gods and demons for control of the life-giving waters which make possible the growth, development, and expansion of the universe. The demons want to bind up the waters, to prevent differentiation or expansion, and the gods of course desire just the

opposite. In the later system of Sāṃkhya philosophy these symbolic values are inverted and the great aim of life is to prevent expansion, to return to an undifferentiated state (cf. Tyler 1973:71-73). The synthesis of these two conflicting solutions constitutes the body of thought that we have come to know as Hinduism. The quest for equilibrium, a dynamic balance between change and permanence, the two contending forces of the cosmos, characterizes not only the Dharma Śāstras but the whole of Hinduism. What seemed at first a rather simple problem of the social order now stands revealed as a restatement of one of the most significant themes of Indian thought, or for that matter, of any thought, namely, "Can the cosmos expand infinitely without degenerating into chaos?"

If the Dharma Śāstras make the origin and growth of the caste system the determinate product of a more encompassing cosmological theory, why have anthropologists and Indologists almost unanimously rejected this native theory, dismissing it as a Brāhman fabrication? The answer is that Western scholars have interpreted the question from a different presuppositional base. They have assumed that change and development, particularly as they imply progress, are good. Permanence, or anything that resists change, is not progressive and implies social stagnation. As for the caste system itself, nearly all Westerners have an abiding distaste for it betrayed by their fascination with it, and unlike the Śāstric sages, calumniate it as the chief instrument of tradition and major impediment to social change. Moreover, because they have naively assumed that the Śāstric account ought to be an objective interpretation of historical facts, they have argued that the account is wrong on objective grounds. In the first place they observe that the varṇas were ideological rather than empirical classes—Indian society probably never actually consisted of just the four scriptural classes. Secondly, many contemporary castes marry exogamously without endangering the structure of local hierarchies. Finally, since many castes are known to have been tribes, they have obviously become castes by incorporation rather than miscegenation.

Though these objections are reasonable enough from the standpoint of objective scholarship, that tradition of scholarship itself obstructs our understanding by tricking us into thinking that the interpretation of the past serves no transcendental master other than objective scholarship. Objective scholarship simply does not come to grips with the problem as it is conceived in the Śāstras, and it utterly fails to account for the hold that the Śāstric model of society has on the Indian imagination. Why, for example, do tribes incorporated into the caste hierarchy almost universally legitimize their status with a mythological case of miscegenation, deriving their origin as a caste from an illicit union between one of their women and a man of one of the first two varṇas, and why is it always an illicit union



between a tribal *woman* and a *male* of one of the *varṇas* rather than the other way around? Why mythologize in the first place, and why mythologize in just this way? In the same vein, we may ask why landholding castes from one end of India to the other have martial pretensions or make themselves out to be descendants of warriors. Or more generally, why do Indian villagers commonly divide themselves into four rather broadly defined groups which they homologize with the four *varṇas*?

These things appear odd to the empirical understanding because they do not readily respond to material interpretation. They are symbolic values rather than material significances, and as symbols of an idea of order it is no more likely for them to signify its material conditions than it is for those conditions to symbolize the idea of order. This general observation is nowhere better illustrated than in the failure of empirical studies to understand why castes are ranked the way they are without invoking the *varṇa* theory. Time and again empirical studies document the facts of hierarchical rank, and as often fail to relate those facts to any determinate set of material conditions which might produce them. They fail because they seek simple links between the symbolic order and material conditions, forgetting that little in the material world directly influences our conceptions of it. We better understand the symbolic order when we recapture it in the immanent forms of its expression—in the categorial and propositional devices of language and thought.

We thus constitute native conceptions by means of native accounts, and we know how the natives conceive of the world when we understand how they account for it in their accounts of it. We now know, for example, that the scriptural *varṇa* scheme is a means of accounting for *jātis*, not only in the *Śāstras* but among contemporary Indians as well. The *jātis* are homologously related to the *varṇa* categories and both are lexical structures exemplifying the same underlying logical principles (Dumont 1970:67-68; Leach 1967:10-11; Tyler 1973:82-83).<sup>1</sup> Dumont correctly characterizes this logic as one of sequential oppositions of dichotomously contrasted semantic features, the result of which is always a ranking of categories. This logistic system corresponds to a particular semantic structure known as a tree (Tyler 1973:82). What is not clear, or more precisely, what is left to the reader's intuition is how this static structure of features distributed across a set of vocabulary items (the names of *varṇas*) entails a particular and definitive set of relations between categories. That is, "how does the formal semantic structure of a vocabulary set relate to anything other than its own formal properties?"

This by now familiar question in cognitive anthropology has induced a number of ambiguous, if not contradictory responses, some of which rest

on a confusion of formal and causal models. Now, although it is quite true that the world makes no sense unless you can see it as something else, and this is precisely what all models facilitate, it is not true that the only good model is a causal one. Formal and causal models have different uses and different implications. My answer to the previous question, then, is that a formal model relates primarily to other formal models and to the procedures by which one formal model may be derived from or otherwise related to some other formal model. It is part of this view, but not demonstrated here, that to the extent that causal models are models, they are simply a subspecies of formal models.

More specifically, the answer I propose is that the concepts expressed by lexemes have ontological commitments which both constitute and reflect constraints on the construction of propositions containing these concepts (lexemes). On this interpretation, propositions have the function of relating concepts, but there are constraints on what concepts can be related in the same proposition (cf. Tyler 1969:16-17). Such constraints are commonly known as co-occurrence restrictions in linguistics, but in less elevated language, it may be that I am saying nothing more consequential than that we don't normally say, for example, "The sheep dogs are flying high tonight" unless some metaphorical or indexical sense of sheep dogs or flying high is intended. But that is not inconsequential. For one thing, it implies that when I am out for an evening stroll, I am not constantly on the alert for flying sheep dogs, or at least for low flying ones. In other words, it is part of my *commonplace knowledge* about the world that flying sheep dogs are rather unusual. Now it is just in this sense that the vocabulary of any language provides the initial clue to that information which it is important for anyone who speaks a language to know, and it is in this sense that languages have ontological commitments. Their vocabularies tell us what there is. Not all of it, of course, but most of it, and quite likely everything that is important. And the co-occurrence restrictions tell us what to expect of what there is. Taken together they comprise a structure of commonplace knowledge.

All this may sound quite conservative since it deals with rather obvious categories of semantic analysis. In essence, we have the meanings of words and the meanings of propositions, both of which refer to language as a system of conventions. This, of course, is an inadequate inventory of the means by which languages mean. It exploits only one aspect of context of use—that of words in propositions—and takes a rather narrow view of the functions of utterances, focusing as it does on overt cognitive form or what might be called primary conceptual content. In a word, it focuses on the objective and conventional aspects of language to the exclusion of such interpretive or expressive features as social context, speaker's intentions, hearer's interpretive procedures, and so on. Aside from complexity, the

major justification for focusing on *convention* at the expense of *intention* is that this paper is based on textual analysis rather than speech. This is not to say that the texts are neutral and unoccasioned. Quite the contrary: they were obviously composed with a purpose and directed to an audience, but for present purposes we merely assume that contextual features relating to the situation of a discourse, such as who initiated the discourse and to whom it was directed, with what intention, are often not fully recoverable in the case of ancient and anonymous texts. Texts are at any rate not fully communicative. Like all language reduced to writing, much that is specified in speech or taken for granted in its setting is repressed in a text. Unlike the speech situation, the text presupposes an anonymous and distant audience which has no rights of interruption or immediate rebuttal. Texts can be anonymous, but anonymous speech is so anomalous that people frequently say "Thank you" to the telephone recording that says "you have dialed incorrectly . . ." Though we must often out of necessity give up the search for the elusive author and his intended audience, we can never abandon the presumption that the text had or has a purpose, that the author had something in mind that urged him to communicate through writing, and knowing something about this purpose may provide our most important key to interpreting the text. This is true even in deciphering unknown scripts. If we were certain about the uses of the Indus seals, for example, we might have an important clue that would lead to deciphering the Indus script. In the case of the texts under examination here, a part of my interpretation rests on the assumption that the authors, confronted by a world that seemed to contradict received doctrine, were motivated to write in order to communicate their solutions to this problem. Moreover, they were motivated by man's common atavistic urge to find determinate order in the world's ungainly happenings.

Though it is usually true that authors have something in mind before they set pen to paper, it is the unusual text that does not betray the inchoate character of the author's original ideas. Despite what often amounts to incredible feats of editing and re-working, the emergent nature of an author's thought is evident in his text just as the emergent nature of speech can be captured in recordings. Whether writing or speaking, we only know what we had in mind after we communicate it, and even then much remains inscrutable. All of which is to say that texts, like all accounts, are characterized by tell-tale evidences of systematization and residues of cast-off developmental stages. These stigmata of imperfection and organic growth attest not only to their human provenience—one of the taken-for-granted features that makes them genuine rather than spurious texts—but also constitute important clues for interpreting obscure concepts. Then too, they are intrinsically interesting documents of that mortal combat between the author and his muse, and they stir in us a sense of kinship as we recon-

struct the struggle between his ends-in-view and the instrument of his expression.

Context of situation may be difficult to construct for texts, but the *context of discourse* that the text itself establishes is another matter. Unlike the fleeting propositions of speech which so quickly fade from memory, those of the text are fixed and can be returned to again and again. They need not be reconstituted in memory every time we want to refer to them. What texts lose in specificity of situational context, they compensate for in permanence and specificity of context of discourse. A text sets up a *universe of discourse* and partially reveals within itself how its constituent concepts are to be understood by the role they play in the discourse. By a universe of discourse we understand a context of propositions that limits the possibilities of interpretation for any proposition in the text. For example, "cats have claws" may have different interpretations depending on the discourse of which it is a part, but once a frame of reference has been established, only those interpretations appropriate to that frame of reference will constitute meaningful interpretations (cf. Hymes 1962:194).

A universe of discourse is a systematically organized whole, and it is important to emphasize that our understanding of concepts in context is constrained by the need to see the context holistically, even if what counts as the totality of a discourse constantly undergoes expansion and retraction. The wholeness of a discourse is not an objective fact, even if we sometimes so construe it. Nor is it a question of precise boundaries that constitutes our orientation to the whole, but our need to see things as totalities, our construction of tentative wholes that is important. It is thus normal for our interpretations of concepts to vary depending on how we have temporarily constituted their relevant universes. As we read a book, for example, our understanding of the author's meaning frequently changes from chapter to chapter, and only after we have finished the book are we able to get a clear notion of its critical concepts or of the work as a whole. Too, this interpretation is subject to change if we see the work in the larger context of similar works, and so on. It goes without saying that occurrence of concepts in such finite contexts as books is no guarantee that we will always come to a clear understanding of them. Our understanding—or the author's—may be defective and the totality we seek cannot be constituted. Nonetheless, that our understanding constructs a universe that transcends the mere occurrence of a concept or proposition is the important point, and it does not matter if our universe of discourse is inconstant.

More important are the interpretive procedures brought to bear on the text itself. A text, like any account, is constituted as a whole by interpreting its propositions as *founding coherent relations among concepts* so that some concepts *entail*, *presuppose*, or *imply* other concepts. The coherence of a text is partly given by logical relations among its constituent proposi-

tions and partly by similar logical reference to notions not explicitly mentioned in the text. For example, if someone says: "I believe in witches but not the devil," we may rightly think that he either does not know or chooses to ignore the fact that witches are persons who receive their occult powers in a compact with the devil. Since the very definition of witch includes mention of the devil and a presupposition of his existence, one cannot have witches without the devil unless one intends something else. Entailments do not always work so smoothly. Saying a cow is a quadruped does not commit one to a belief in the existence of an incarnate quadruped. Quadrupeds are fine conceptually, but they don't give much milk. Somewhat in the manner of entailments, presuppositions also direct our attention beyond the concept or proposition itself to what it supposes. If I should say "pass me the pie," it might be considered odd if there were no pie in evidence, unless of course there were some other plausible interpretation of my desire for non-existent pies. This case illustrates a common presupposition; namely, there is generally a discoverable interpretation for what people say which will make their having said it reasonable. This presupposition is part of the mutual credit of human communication. Still, it does not mean that everything said will be rational. For example, if we are told: "All witches have brooms, but there are no witches," we are justified in feeling that something is odd about the implicational structure of this proposition and we may question the rationality behind it.

In addition to entailment, presupposition, and implication, which may operate overtly within the text and in our interpretive procedures, there are equally important procedures more normally but not exclusively restricted to the internal structure of the text. These have the effect of making two different concepts identical either by direct assignment of *identity* as in the case of *metaphor*, by a proportional *equivalence* of features which preserves a given pattern of relationships as in the case of *analogy* and *homology*, or by direct substitution of so-called "pro-forms," that is by substituting a different name for the same concept. The latter is frequently only a stylistic device to avoid repetition, but has other uses, as, for example, in epithets, reciting the names of a deity by reference to his attributes, avoidance of reprehensible or tabooed names, flattery, insult, derision, and many more. Significantly, the assignment of identities either deliberately or unconsciously suppresses or deletes some features of the concepts related and magnifies others, thus effecting a kind of *transformation* of meaning. Other transformations are brought about through *inversion* and *negation*. Finally, some concepts and metaphoric procedures are so deeply imbedded in the text that they constitute *archetypes*—key words and symbols whose meanings dominate the text and provide the base for metaphoric extension. Some archetypes are so submerged in the categories of language that they are practically inaccessible even to the finest analysis.

Because they often constitute the terms which make the world intelligible, it is absurd to believe that we can get outside these concepts or hold them in a neutral pattern while we look at them and remodel them. They are part of the given.

There are other more obvious features of texts which, though obvious, nonetheless comprise part of what makes us respond to a text as an appropriate example of the genre. It ought to have or at least portend a beginning and an end. It ought to have a focused topic or be about something, and it should have what I shall call *transitivity of implication*, a certain developmental tension—to give a sense of the movement of ideas, that it is “going somewhere.” This is not necessarily a temporal dimension, though it may well be, but rather a question of the sequentiality of themes and sub-topics. At a minimum, some things come after others and there is a reason for it.

Simple juxtaposition of propositions or parts of a text is a basis for inferring a relation between the things juxtaposed. Thus every schoolboy is taught to outline the structure of themes—a procedure that rests on intuitive relations of inclusion and contrast. We interpret the members of a set of juxtaposed propositions in the same level of contrast as instances of evidentiary, exemplary, causal, or counter-factual relations, even when these relations are not overtly signaled by their appropriate syntactic forms. When propositions are juxtaposed either in time or space we are inclined to relate them (cf. Hymes 1973:348). Contrast between propositions or parts of a text often takes the form of *antinomy*, either overtly expressed or only implied by position in the text. When antinomies occur we are seldom content with mere paradox and expect resolution. We anticipate *dialectical movement*. Oppositions between contrasting concepts should be reconciled in a higher level synthesis, and if they are not we sense incompleteness.

Both the author and reader of a text presume the reader's ability to interpret creatively—even if this amounts to nothing more than the ability to supply missing information from background knowledge. The text need not—indeed cannot—provide all the particulars of its own interpretation, nor can it formally exclude all possible interpretations. Readers are expected to supply missing information or to invent an interpretation of the significance of its absence (cf. Garfinkel 1964). In the interpretation of ancient texts in foreign languages it is this presumption that creates the greatest difficulties in translation and interpretation. We simply do not know what background knowledge is called for. Because we do not know the normative forms presupposed by the text and its author, we are cut off from the creative reflexivity that exists between the text and its culture. At best we supply only a confused approximation based on our understanding of the foreign culture and derived ultimately from the normative forms of



our own culture. How we interpret such a text perhaps reveals more of ourselves than of the text or of the culture behind it.

It is important to discriminate between the notions of propositional and lexical analysis proposed here and those currently modish in linguistics. The chief difference concerns the *situatedness* and the *pragmatically occasioned* character of concepts and propositions (cf. Hymes 1972). The contemporary fashion in semantic analysis in linguistics, whether of the *interpretive* (Katz 1972) or *generative* (McCawley 1968; Lakoff 1971) style is to analyze indiscriminately any collection of words or propositions, the only apparent constraint on choice being either prosaicness or outlandishness. It is not surprising that anthropological linguists, who have always been more sensitive to aspects of context, should be suspicious of sample analyses consisting of sentences chosen largely for their titillating effect on a small coterie of linguists rather than for their critical role in a conceptual pattern or body of discourse.

It is not that analysis based on a paradigm case is necessarily suspect, but one does wonder what conceivable context or pragmatic interest might occasion such a paradigm case as “\*The salami is sleeping” (Lakoff 1971: 330), or, for that matter, “The sheep dogs are flying high tonight.” These starred (\*), context-free sentences which are supposedly semantically ambiguous or incoherent always invite an interpretation. Thus, my reaction to “\*The salami is sleeping” is “How coincidental, Lakoff knows my Uncle George.” The point, of course, is that we do not normally come upon such utterances outside a context, and when we do, we supply an appropriate one as part of our normal interpretive procedures—unless the context provides reason to believe that we should momentarily suspend interpretation.

Linguistics shares with philosophy a penchant for critical examples lacking readily interpretable situations of use, outside of the taken-for-granted universe of linguistic and philosophical discourse, and because such instances as are adduced are problematic only within this rather rarefied context, linguistic and philosophical discussions of meaning exude an air of unreality. In like manner, psycholinguistic research incorrectly assumes that what is arbitrarily problematic within the particularly restricted context of an experimental situation is similarly or analogously problematic within a universalized non-experimental situation. A significant part of the neglected context then, is: “What is problematic here?” or, “The problem is, ‘what is the problem?’” We come to know, for example, of the noxiousness of the seemingly innocuous sentence “The present King of France is bald” only when we are acquainted with its role in the philosophical discussion of the problem of reference (cf. Russell 1920). Such sentences are indexical. They stand for an entire conceptual scheme. One might, for example, capture the whole problematic of logical atomism in the indexical



sentence: "Were it not for the fact that his unicorn went lame, Russell would necessarily have caught the bald present king of France on the golden mountain by the extended green light of the morning or evening star." Anyone acquainted with this tradition will readily recognize the now fusty problems of a once lively conceptual order indexed by the syntactic form of this sentence and its fragments of former paradigm cases.

This particular case also illustrates another aspect of "problematics." That is, we must almost always distinguish between the overt problem being addressed directly and those covert or surreptitious concepts that make the overt problem a sensible problem. In Russell's case, the overt problem of reference is articulated within a covert theory of meaning which takes *giving names to things* as the archetype for all forms of meaning. When Wittgenstein exposed the faulty footings of this theory of meaning, that is, made the previously unproblematic covert concepts problematic, the problem of reference ceased to be a problem of meaning. In the present case, I argue that although one of the overt problems addressed by the Śāstric writers (and contemporary anthropologists) was how jātis relate to varṇas, the covert problem referred to underlying ideas that we might gloss with the familiar oppositions order and disorder, permanence and change, and good and evil. And finally, part of our problem in understanding these texts arises from our infatuation with a conceptual scheme that assigns a positive valuation (good) to order and change while the texts presuppose both a different valuation and a different set of oppositions.

This introduction is a brief, oversimplified sketch of a complex subject, but it should be sufficient to indicate something of the range of procedures and assumptions involved in this paper, where I make explicit use of such notions as lexical analysis, propositional analysis, and homological structure in an attempt to make clear certain archetypes and their processes of metaphoric extension in a body of literature known as Śāstras.<sup>2</sup> The archetypes involved are concepts of order and disorder, change and persistence. The key terms are given as the analysis unfolds. Lest we lose our way in this jungle of analytic procedure, let me insert a reminder that our aim is to reconstruct what the ancient and now anonymous authors of these texts had in mind—both consciously and unconsciously.

#### LEXICAL ANALYSIS: THE VARṆA HIERARCHY

Early Sanskrit tradition divides society into two broad groups: Āryan and non-Āryan. The former is subdivided into four hierarchically ranked groups (varṇas): Brāhmins (priests), Kṣatriyas (warriors), Vaiśyas (merchants), and Sūdras (servants). The latter consists of Dasyus (slaves) and Mlechchas (barbarian foreigners). To illuminate the structure of this system we define the following: a set A consisting of subsets {V, T}, denoting Āryan and non-Āryan respectively, where: V = {B, K, V, S} and T = {D, M},

where B = Brāhmaṇ, K = Kṣatriya, V = Vaiśya, S = Śūdra; D = Dasyu, M = Mlechcha; and a set  $G = \{w, \bar{w}, x, \bar{x}, y, \bar{y}, z, \bar{z}\}$ , where  $w$  = is Āryan,  $\bar{w}$  = is non-Āryan,  $x$  = is twice born (Dvija),  $\bar{x}$  = is once born,  $y$  = has dominion over men,  $\bar{y}$  = does not have dominion over men,  $z$  = has a sacerdotal function,  $\bar{z}$  = does not have a sacerdotal function, such that the intersection of A and G ( $A \times G$ ) yields the following distribution of attributes:

B:  $w, x, y, z$

K:  $w, x, y, \bar{z}$

V:  $w, x, \bar{y}, \bar{z}$

S:  $w, \bar{x}, \bar{y}, \bar{z}$

D:  $\bar{w}, \bar{x}, \bar{y}, \bar{z}$

M:  $\bar{w}, \bar{x}, \bar{y}, \bar{z}$

This reads: B is an Āryan, is twice born, has dominion over men, and has a sacerdotal function; and so on for each class. Since D and M do not contrast on the attributes listed here we will treat them as a single category,  $\emptyset$ , defined as the empty set for V, thus redefining V as  $\{B, K, V, S, \emptyset\}$ . For the nature of the contrast between D and M, see Tyler (1973:82). In more familiar matrix form this distribution is seen in diagram 1.

		G			
		w	x	y	z
V	B	+	+	+	+
	K	+	+	+	-
	V	+	+	-	-
	S	+	-	-	-
	$\emptyset$	-	-	-	-

DIAGRAM 1. MATRIX DISTRIBUTION OF ATTRIBUTES (G) ON CLASSES (V).

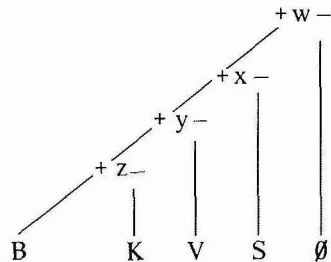


DIAGRAM 2. SEMANTIC TREE OF VARṆA RANK (S) (Cf. Tyler 1973:82).

In diagram 2, relative rank is automatically assigned by sums of positive attributes. Thus in rank order  $B = 4$ ,  $K = 3$ ,  $V = 2$ ,  $S = 1$ ,  $\emptyset = 0$ .

It should be noted that the attributes of set G may be redefined in a great many ways, but so long as the distribution of positive attributes (however defined) remains constant, the ranking remains constant. For example, the texts themselves offer the following alternative attributes expressed as duties and livelihoods or occupations. The twice born are to study the Vedas, perform sacrifices, and give alms. In addition, the Brāhman teaches the Vedas, performs sacrifices for others, and receives alms, the Kṣatriya protects the people and receives taxes, the Vaiśya tends cattle, and the Śūdra serves all the others. Viṣṇu (V, 5-14, Jolly 1880:12-13) defines the dominant attributes as shown in diagram 3.

VARṆA	DUTIES	LIVELIHOODS
Brāhman	Teach	Sacrifice and receive alms
Kṣatriya	Practice at arms (Protect the people)	Receive taxes
Vaiśya	Tend cattle	Agriculture, trade
Śūdra	Serve	Practice of arts

DIAGRAM 3. VARṆA DUTIES AND LIVELIHOODS ACCORDING TO VIṢṆU.

#### PROPOSITIONAL ANALYSIS: THE RELATIONS AMONG VARṆA CATEGORIES

The preceding discussion of duties and livelihoods leads to the question of recipients of the dutiful actions. Aside from the fact that they are categorically incumbent on varṇa members, in the sense that one must perform one's varṇa duties because performing them is an almost compulsive expression of one's varṇa nature, the actions have to be directed toward someone else, and the answer is, of course, the other varṇas. Formally expressed, the injunction to perform duties is seen as a relation between ordered pairs of varṇas. The relation (function) in each case is reflexive, intransitive, and symmetrical, and is defined by the open sentence:  $f = a, b, P(x, y)$ , which assigns a particular relation to each ordered pair of varṇas. Thus, for example in the first line of the function  $f$  below, the ordered pair consists of Brāhman (B) and Brāhman (B); "teaches and performs sacrifice for" is substituted for  $P$ ; Brāhman is substituted for  $x$  and Brāhman is substituted for  $y$ . The open sentence  $P(x, y)$  is interpreted as "teaches Brāhmaṇs, Brāhmaṇs" or "performs sacrifice for Brāhmaṇs, Brāhmaṇs," or in normal English word order as "Brāhmaṇs teach Brāhmaṇs, Brāhmaṇs sacrifice for Brāhmaṇs."

$$\begin{aligned}
 f &= \begin{cases} B, B & P(x, y) \text{ where } P(x, y) = B \text{ teaches or performs sacrifices for } B \\ B, K & P(x, y) \text{ where } P(x, y) = B \text{ teaches or performs sacrifices for } K \\ B, V & P(x, y) \text{ where } P(x, y) = B \text{ teaches or performs sacrifices for } V \end{cases} \\
 g &= \begin{cases} K, K & P(x, y) \text{ where } P(x, y) = K \text{ protects (rules) } K \\ K, B & P(x, y) \text{ where } P(x, y) = K \text{ protects (rules) } B \\ K, V & P(x, y) \text{ where } P(x, y) = K \text{ protects (rules) } V \\ K, S & P(x, y) \text{ where } P(x, y) = K \text{ protects (rules) } S \end{cases} \\
 h &= \begin{cases} V, V & P(x, y) \text{ where } P(x, y) = V \text{ gives goods (alms, taxes) to } V \\ V, B & P(x, y) \text{ where } P(x, y) = V \text{ gives goods (alms, taxes) to } B \\ V, K & P(x, y) \text{ where } P(x, y) = V \text{ gives goods (alms, taxes) to } K \\ V, S & P(x, y) \text{ where } P(x, y) = V \text{ gives goods (alms, taxes) to } S \end{cases} \\
 i &= \begin{cases} S, S & P(x, y) \text{ where } P(x, y) = S \text{ serves (gives labor to) } S \\ S, B & P(x, y) \text{ where } P(x, y) = S \text{ serves (gives labor to) } B \\ S, K & P(x, y) \text{ where } P(x, y) = S \text{ serves (gives labor to) } K \\ S, V & P(x, y) \text{ where } P(x, y) = S \text{ serves (gives labor to) } V \end{cases}
 \end{aligned}$$

The interrelationships among groups are not clear from this presentation, but if we now take the product functions (composition of functions) for these groups, we have the following:

$$\begin{aligned}
 f \ B, K &= g \circ h \circ i, & g \circ h \\
 f \ B, V &= h \circ i, & h \circ g, & h \circ g \circ i \\
 g \ K, B &= f \circ h \\
 g \ K, V &= h \circ f, & h \circ i \circ f, & h \circ i \\
 g \ K, S &= i \circ f, & i \circ h, & i \circ f \circ h, & i \circ h \circ f \\
 h \ V, B &= f \circ g, & f \circ g \circ i, \\
 h \ V, K &= g \circ f, & g \circ i \\
 h \ V, S &= i \circ g, & i \circ f \circ g, & i \circ f \\
 i \ S, B &= f \circ g, & f \circ g \circ h, & f \circ h \\
 i \ S, K &= g \circ f \circ h, & g \circ h \\
 i \ S, V &= h \circ g.
 \end{aligned}$$

This signifies that one function  $f$  which relates B and K is equivalent to the compound functions  $g, h, i$  and  $g, h$ . That is, because B is related to S by  $i$ , S to V by  $h$ , and V to K by  $g$ , B and K are related by the functions  $g, h, i$ . Similarly because B is related to V by  $h$  and V to K by  $g$  there is a relation between B and K defined by the functions  $g, h$ . These relationships are more readily apparent in diagram 4. When these relations are stated in this way, it is obvious that they delineate a system of exchange. The structure of this system is represented in diagram 4.

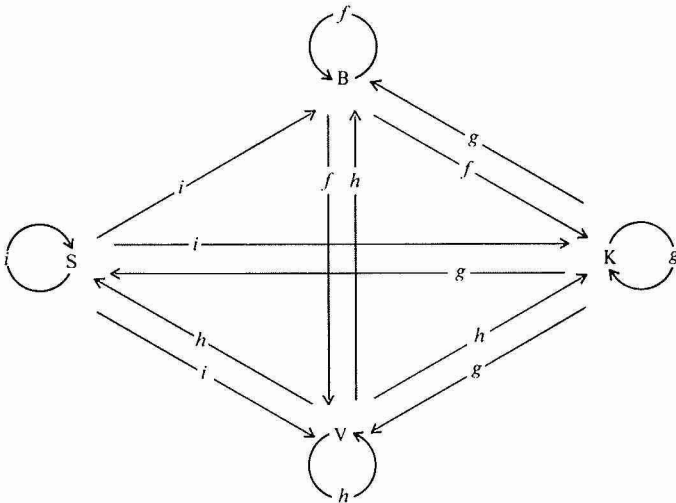


DIAGRAM 4. CAYLEY DIAGRAM OF EXCHANGE OF DUTIES AMONG VARṆAS. Reflexivity is indicated by the circular loops emanating from and terminating in each labeled node. Exchanges between groups are indicated by signed arrows between labeled nodes, the signs corresponding with the functions defined on p. 125.

Since there is no arrow from B to S in diagram 4, it is apparent that this is not a system of direct reciprocal exchange. It should be noted that the arrows between V and S are highly problematic. The texts do allow Śūdras to serve Vaiśyas, but only wealthy, high class ones, and only when they cannot find a Brāhmaṇ or Kṣatriya to serve.

Given these relations, it is important to discover if any one set comprises an ordering of the sets of varṇas and in particular a rank ordering. We want to know whether this system of exchange entails a dominance structure. That is, when we say that K protects B, does K dominate B and B dominate V and V dominate S? When I speak of ordering, I intend it in the technical sense of the transitivity and connectivity of relations (cf. Suppes 1957:223).

Since all of the relations between varṇas are by definition intransitive, it is not possible that any single function can comprise an ordering of the set of varṇas. That is, although there may be a relation between B and K such that B sacrifices for K, it does not follow that K sacrifices for V or S. Similarly K may rule B, but B does not rule V or S. No one function by itself can constitute a rank ordering. This implies that we must turn to the composition of functions (product functions) in order to discover a form of transitivity. If we examine diagram 4, it becomes apparent that the composition of functions  $i \circ h \circ g \circ f$  constitutes an inverse, that is, in this instance, a pathway through each node from B to B (defined by  $f$  B, K;  $g$  K, V;  $h$  V, S;  $i$  S, B). Since this set is characterized as having an inverse, identity, and associativity, it is a mathematical group, and it is the inverse relation which establishes the connectivity of the set.<sup>3</sup> This emphasizes that any single factor interpretation of this system of exchange as reflecting the power or dominance of the Kṣatriya is wrong on formal grounds. It also alerts us to the inadequacy of any argument which attempts to explain the system simply as an economic system, but there are other and better arguments against this notion.

#### HOMOLOGICAL STRUCTURES: THE VARṆAS

When two or more structures exhibit the same logical organization, but differ only in scale or in the names of attributes or classes, we refer to these structures as homologous.<sup>4</sup> I will now demonstrate that the relation between the classical varṇa system and the contemporary system of jātis (castes) is one of homology. In order to simplify the demonstration I will work with groups of *jātis having the same functional definition* rather than with individual jātis. That is to say, since the basis of definition is the same, I posit as a conceptual universal a contemporary varṇa system,  $V'$ , consisting of four functionally defined groups:  $B'$ , priestly jāti(s);  $K'$ , land-owning jāti(s),  $V'$ , artisan jāti(s),  $S'$ , untouchable jāti(s), thus:  $V' = \{B', K', V', S', \emptyset'\}$ ; and I also posit a set of attributes  $G'$ , where  $G' = \{w', \bar{w}', x', \bar{x}', y', \bar{y}', z', \bar{z}'\}$  such that  $w' = \text{Hindu}$ ,  $x' = \text{clean}$ ,  $y' = \text{dominates}$ , and  $z' = \text{religious specialist}$ .

There is a product of  $G'$  and  $V'$  ( $G' \times V'$ ) which gives the situation in diagram 5. It is obvious that except for differences in attributes and class definitions this is precisely the same structure as that represented for the varṇa system in diagram 2. In fact, under the conventions adopted here, it is a particular kind of homomorphism known as an isomorphism. That is, it preserves all but the names of attributes and classes. It may seem unlikely that semantic structures should display the kind of persistence implied here, but that is precisely the argument that is made (see also Tyler 1973:151, 154-155). The distribution of features in diagram 5 induces the semantic tree of diagram 6.

		G'			
		w	x	y	z
V'	B'	+	+	+	+
	K'	+	+	+	-
	V'	+	+	-	-
	S'	+	-	-	-
	Ø'	-	-	-	-

DIAGRAM 5. MATRIX DISTRIBUTION OF ATTRIBUTES G' ON CLASSES V'.

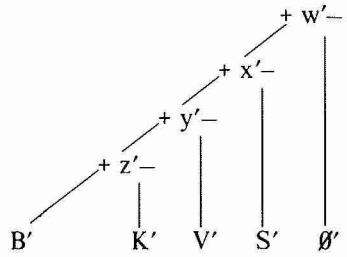


DIAGRAM 6. SEMANTIC TREE OF VARṆA RANKS.

#### HOMOLOGICAL STRUCTURES: JAJMĀNĪ

The early predisposition for defining social groups by attributes entailing functions is also characteristic of the contemporary period where functional relationships between jātis are expressed in a system of exchange widely known as jajmānī. The jajmānī system is a homology of the functional relations between varṇas as they are expressed even in the earliest texts. Using the varṇa categories of the contemporary homology we have the following distribution of functions:

$$f' = \begin{cases} B', B', P(x, y) \text{ where } P(x, y) = B' \text{ performs sacrifice for } B' \\ B', K', P(x, y) \text{ where } P(x, y) = B' \text{ performs sacrifice for } K' \\ B', V', P(x, y) \text{ where } P(x, y) = B' \text{ performs sacrifice for } V' \end{cases}$$

$$g' = \begin{cases} K', K', P(x, y) \text{ where } P(x, y) = K' \text{ gives grain to } K' \\ K', B', P(x, y) \text{ where } P(x, y) = K' \text{ gives grain to } B' \\ K', V', P(x, y) \text{ where } P(x, y) = K' \text{ gives grain to } V' \\ K', S', P(x, y) \text{ where } P(x, y) = K' \text{ gives grain to } S' \end{cases}$$

$$h' = \begin{cases} V', V', P(x, y) \text{ where } P(x, y) = V' \text{ gives manufactured goods to } V' \\ V', B', P(x, y) \text{ where } P(x, y) = V' \text{ gives manufactured goods to } B' \\ V', K', P(x, y) \text{ where } P(x, y) = V' \text{ gives manufactured goods to } K' \end{cases}$$



$$i' = \begin{cases} S', S', P(x, y) \text{ where } P(x, y) = S' \text{ gives labor to } S' \\ S', B', P(x, y) \text{ where } P(x, y) = S' \text{ gives labor to } B' \\ S', K', P(x, y) \text{ where } P(x, y) = S' \text{ gives labor to } K' \end{cases}$$

Composition of functions yields diagram 7.

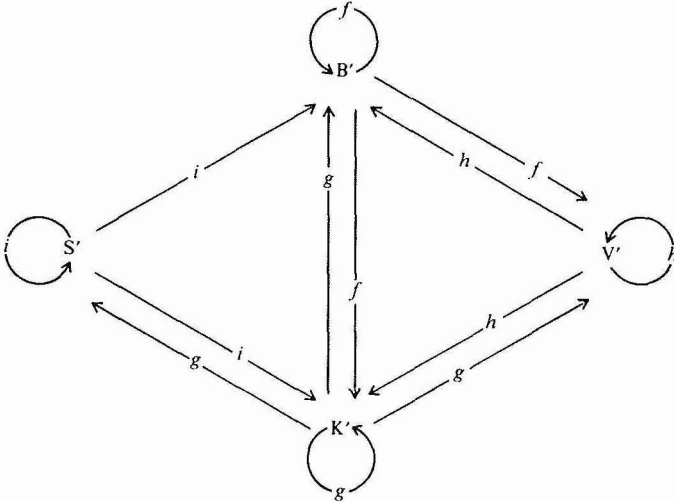


DIAGRAM 7. CAYLEY DIAGRAM OF JAJMĀNĪ RELATIONS.

In comparing diagram 4 with diagram 7, note that the positions of V and K have been inverted. This reflects a difference in the definition of functions underlying the two diagrams. The functions underlying diagram 7 do not include a relation between the ordered pairs (V, S) and (S, V), while those underlying diagram 4 do. The structure depicted in diagram 7, while clearly a homology of the one depicted in diagram 4, is a transformation on the structure of diagram 4. The transformation is described by the deletion of reciprocal relations between V and S. This deletion in turn derives from the redefinition of *g*. That is, where  $g = a, b, x$  gives protection to  $y$ ,  $g' = a, b, x$  gives grain to  $y$ . It is to be noted that the latter can be interpreted as one of the class of propositions that could be generated by  $h = a, b, x$  gives goods to  $y$ . In simpler terms, giving grain is a kind of giving goods—if grain is a kind of good—which means that K has taken over some part of the function of V. This is related, of course, to the difference in varṇa attributes for K and K'. In the one case K has the attribute “dominion,” and in the other K' has the attribute “dominates,” reflecting a difference in the role of the king and his homologue, the landlord. As readers of Hocart (1950) will readily note, there is a certain degradation of the royal style.

It can be objected that what I have characterized as the contemporary jajmānī system is incorrect or at best a gross oversimplification, because it

specifies functions for whole jāti groups rather than for individual jātis or, more precisely, individuals or families belonging to individual jātis. There are actually three related arguments here: (1) there are more than four groups; (2) there are more than four functions; (3) the relations are between families or individuals rather than jātis. Arguments one and three are similar because they seek to expand and redefine the nodes of diagram 7, whereas argument two advocates expansion of the number of different signed arrows. Here I advance the argument that expansion, whether of nodes or arrows, is irrelevant to the underlying structure of the system—so long as every expansion creates a homomorphism of that underlying system. To demonstrate, let the following identities obtain:

B = Venkaṭayya Rao (a proper name)

K = Rāmayya Rāju (a proper name)

V = Lakṣminarsu (a proper name)

S = Lingu (a proper name)

and, let the relations between these individuals be as defined for diagram 7. Then the structure of diagram 7 remains constant, the only change being the substitution of personal names for varṇa categories. There will be as many such structures as there are individuals whose relations are defined in this way. Individualization under these conditions simply proliferates identical structures. The same argument applies for substitution of jāti names for varṇa groups.

Even if substitution of names does not entail a change in structure so long as the number of groups and relations remain constant, what are the consequences of increasing the number of groups? To illustrate, let diagram 8 be a system of exchange defined as in previous instances, but consisting of ten rather than four groups.

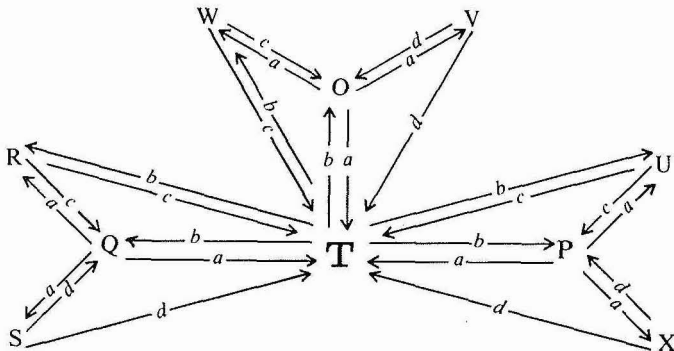


DIAGRAM 8. HYPOTHETICAL SYSTEM OF EXCHANGE.

At first glance there appears to be a significant difference between the structure in diagrams 8 and 7, but closer inspection reveals that they are, except for the reflexivity of relations, equivalent. This results from the fact that similarity of function makes it possible to define groups as functionally equivalent. Thus O, P, Q are an equivalence class because they all have the same characteristic function (*a*) and are reciprocally linked to all other groups by the same class of function (*b*, *c*, *d*). The symbols *a*, *b*, *c*, *d* indicate relations between groups. Similarly, R, U, W are equivalent because they have the same characteristic function (*c*) and are reciprocally linked to all other groups by the same class of functions (*a*, *b*). Grouping on the basis of similarity of functional definition yields the following classes of groups:

- (1)  $B = \{T\}$  with function *b* and reciprocal *a*, *c*, *d*
- (2)  $K = \{O, P, Q\}$  with function *a* and reciprocal *b*, *c*, *d*
- (3)  $V = \{R, U, W\}$  with function *c* and reciprocal *a*, *b*
- (4)  $S = \{S, V, X\}$  with function *d* and reciprocal *a*

Since relations between these four classes of groups are defined as: *a*(K, V) (K, B) (K, S); *b*(B, K) (B, V); *c*(V, K) (V, T); *d*(S, K) (S, B) we have the equivalence structure illustrated in diagram 9.

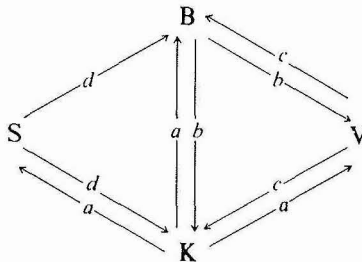


DIAGRAM 9. EQUIVALENCE STRUCTURE.

The only difference between diagrams 9 and 7 is the absence of reflexive loops in diagram 9. These loops designating reflexive relations were omitted only for diagrammatic simplification and their absence indicates no structural difficulty. As a further illustration of this point note that the sequences T-R-Q-S, T-U-P-X, T-W-O-V in diagram 8 are equivalence structures, equivalent to one another and to the structure of diagrams 9 and 7. The important point is that expanding the number of participating groups has no effect on the structure of exchange so long as the relations between groups are constant. The problem is simply one of discovering which groups are functionally equivalent, and I add with emphasis, this is precisely how

the problem is posed by the contemporary Indian villager. Classification of jātis, and more importantly, their relative positions in the village hierarchy, are made by assignments of just the kind outlined here. My claim then is that this abstract model is merely a formalization of rules that are psychologically real.

If neither the number of groups nor the designation of names (that is, of individuals or groups) affects the structure when the definition of functions remains constant, what is the effect of increasing the number of functions? It is easy to demonstrate that increasing the number of functions has no effect on the structure of exchange so long as each constituent group is defined as a homologue of one of the four groups of diagram 7—which is to say that new functions are subject to typing and classification just as new groups are. To illustrate the point, suppose group B is subdivided into two subgroups on the basis of each having a different function. Thus  $B_1$  officiates in temple rituals and  $B_2$  officiates in domestic rituals. From the point of view of any member of  $B_1$  or  $B_2$ , the difference between these functions is significant, requiring rigorous separation of the two groups, but from the standpoint of anyone in groups A, D, or C, this difference is irrelevant because it does not substantially alter the basic sacerdotal function of which officiating in temples and in domestic sacrifices are only differing modes of expression. So long as members of A, D, and C can type these functions as variant expressions of the same underlying function, proliferation of functions within the B group has no significance outside the B group. The problem for the native villager then is to determine by various arbitrary means which functions are equivalent.

If we seek an objective characterization of this homologizing we are led into the temptation of declaring that the structure remains constant if and only if (1) each constituent group has only one dominant function; (2) each constituent group has a unique function; and (3) each constituent group has a characteristic relation to a dominant group. Now, it may seem that it is precisely these three features that no longer characterize the system of exchange in an Indian village. From numerous village studies we know that members of the same jāti may have quite different occupations, that members of very differently ranked jātis may work at the same occupations, that there is constant and unremitting competition for dominance among powerful jātis, and that the power of dominant jātis (particularly landholders) is challenged by the availability of new occupations that are independent of the village land system. Much of this is irrefutable, and we seem to want to conclude that these objective facts make the jajmānī system impossible as an objective structure. Thus, the argument links two objective terms: (1) the system as an objective fact; and (2) its conditions as objective facts. The problem here is twofold: (1) the terms of the argument are actually mixed; and (2) the jajmānī system persists, albeit perhaps in truncated form, not only as an objective system of exchange, but more importantly

*as a subjective system for the assignment of functional attributes to jātis.*

It should be abundantly clear by now that the formal structure of the *jajmānī* system can hardly count as an objective fact. It has been defined here appropriately as a formalization of a structure of thought. Therefore, any argument construing it solely as an objective fact related to other objective facts confuses the terms of the argument by relating a formal structure to material conditions having no connection with its formal dimensions. Moreover, we are attracted to the conclusion that the objective conditions outlined above make it impossible for the native to homologize divergent functions, yet there is nothing in the facts that warrants this conclusion. If the objective facts tempt us to conclude that the *jajmānī* system cannot persist as a system of economic exchange, then why does it persist at all? The answer is that the *jajmānī* system is not now, nor ever was, primarily a system of economic exchange. It was and is a system of exchange certainly, but only incidentally of economic goods. Our problem arises because we construe the movement of economic goods as the primary function of exchange. On the analogy of physics we focus on transactions that signify just the objective movement of things, forgetting that exchange may also affirm the moral basis of society. Transactions do not just *signify* the movement of goods, they *symbolize* mutual obligation. The objective movement of goods can only signify the fact of exchange, and because it thus implies nothing more than exchange, it cannot by itself reveal its meaning, cannot speak of what it symbolizes. We must distinguish then, between transactions that merely signify and those that symbolize. Thus, when an Indian farmer, from his hard-won crop, gives a traditional share of grain to the blacksmith who fashioned his implements of production, it is not just a payment for goods and services but an affirmation of a continuing relationship which recognizes the fixed pattern of statuses and symbolizes the performance of mutual duties. His act symbolizes the moral obligations of the social order. It symbolizes *dharma* in both of its senses as duty and order. The mutually implicated acts of the farmer and the blacksmith are simultaneously expressions of their respective duties (*dharma*) and affirmations of social order (*dharma*). They only incidentally signify the objective movement of goods, for that is but a consequence of *dharma*, not its cause. Transactions between groups are thus symbolic affirmations of group ranking. They both confirm and constitute the relative positions of groups in the hierarchy.

Significantly, economic transactions are but one of the many possible settings in which these group relations may be symbolized. The giving and taking of food, the exchange of women in marriage, precedence in ceremonies, patterns of respect and deference in speech and behavior, and performance of religious observances serve equally as appropriate settings. This does not imply that transactions in these settings will always be interpreted symbolically. Since they are not necessary to what they symbolize they may sometimes be taken as neutral significations, interpreted as inap-

propriate symbolic vehicles—as in the case of many contemporary economic transactions.

If symbolic settings are arbitrary and contingent in this way, how can participants arrive at consensus, how can they come to agreement about the appropriateness or relevance of a given setting? The answer, of course, is that they often disagree and fail to reach consensus, but this merely confirms the negotiated character of symbolism and points to the cognitive reality of an underlying ideological constant which serves as an ideal typification, a paragon of all such situations. I refer to the varṇa system with its entailed notions of separate classes functionally defined and hierarchically related. The varṇa system functions as a homological base. In any relevant transactional setting each group is thought to be functionally defined, to have a dominant function relative to that setting, to have a unique function relative to that setting, and to have a rank relative to other groups in that setting. Whatever the setting, each group may be defined homologically with the definitions of the varṇas in the classical system. The logic of the homology remains constant, not its various manifestations. And, even though there may still be persistent disagreement over the relevance of any given setting, this disagreement only makes sense under the presupposition that transactional settings may symbolize the moral order.

In the Dharma Śāstras nothing is more clear than that the moral or cosmic order (dharma) dominates the economic and social orders. This view contradicts our notion that “business is business,” the predominant presumption distilled out of the historical circumstances of the Western experience of the industrial revolution. Whether communist or capitalist we hold that the social order emerges out of the movement of economic goods. We first see this conception of society as a transcendent unity created by transactions between egoistic atoms in our idea of the market, and we trace this purely cognitive transformation of the idea of the market from that of a concrete locality to a transcendental abstraction in the writings of proto-economists of the eighteenth century who both effected and documented it. In its earlier concrete form the market was simply a neutral place of exchange, the brief meeting of strangers solely for the purpose of handing over natural goods, goods which had not been culturally transformed, which had not become symbolic. They were places set aside, immunized as it were, from the surrounding culture—not just secular places, but places of *pure objectivity*. They were concrete localities where objects of one kind came together in exchange for objects of other kinds. They were meaningless places where disparate groups could meet without incurring moral obligation, places where citizenship, persona, and soul could be forgotten. Because they implied amorality it is not surprising that they should so often have been associated with carnivals. Fairs were, and anyone who has in his youth walked a midnight midway can affirm that they still are, both places of exchange and settings in which everyday morality is temporarily set

aside. Fairs, and early markets too, combined exchange with the atmosphere of a carnival.

Though it began in amorality, the market gradually acquired a kind of second-hand morality by driving out all other kinds of morality. The market itself became a moral system, a symbolic code and source of metaphor so powerful that we could even speak of the university as a "market place for the free exchange of ideas," and conceive of God as Chairman of the Board. Seemingly the market could be immunized from culture, but not vice versa.

Given this presuppositional background, is it any wonder that we misinterpret the *jajmānī* system and cannot account for its persistence? If we limit our view to those relations that we define as economic functions, and then interpret the persistence of the system solely in those terms, we can only conclude that it should not exist. But if we understand that economic transactions may or may not be interpreted as symbolic transactions, we can understand how the exchange of economic goods can go on without necessarily affecting either the *jajmānī* system or the hierarchy of social groups. Moreover, we can understand how it may have so done from time immemorial. The native mind, which sees economic transactions only as potential symbols of group rank, does not (unlike the imagination of the anthropologist) seize upon economic exchange as the only or even the primary symbol of the relations between groups. Because the *jajmānī* system is only incidentally a system of economic exchange, seeing it solely as a system of economic exchange mistakes the system for one of its effects.

If we seek some understanding of the persistence of the *jajmānī* system, it is important to point out that it is first of all a homology of the sacrifice. This leads us to ask: "What then is the basis for a metaphoric identity between exchange and sacrifice?" There are several, such as for example, the giving of gifts (cf. Tyler 1973:164-165), but more importantly, both sacrifice and exchange imply something about the transformation of one thing into another, the assignment or reassignment of meaning. The root metaphor for this whole process is the idea of *creation*, that original formation of order out of chaos, that first transformation of the natural world which changed it into a meaningful cultural world. I am suggesting that this process of establishing order out of the disarray of natural phenomena constitutes the basis for the homology between sacrifice and exchange in general and *jajmānī* in particular. Each of the *varṇas*, except the *Śūdra*, participates directly in a transformation of the natural world into an ordered cultural world. Specifically, the *Brāhmaṇ* is concerned with the order of the cosmos (*dharma*), the *Kṣatriya* with the order of society (*artha*), and the *Vaiśya* with the order of goods (*kāma*). The *Śūdra* is himself the symbol of nature, the antithesis of culture, and both *Śūdra* and nature are consequently equated with the demonic. Those who engage in this transformation



are polluted by contact with the material of nature, and the more intimately their activities involve the original elements of nature, the more polluted they are. Beginning with the first mention of the four varṇas in the *Puruṣa Sūkta* of the *Ṛg Veda*, the texts delight in symbolizing and re-emphasizing this relationship. The same hierarchic classification of order, the same order of orders, emerges in each context. The order of the cosmos (*dharma*) includes both the order of society (*artha*) and the economic order (*kāma*), and since the order of the cosmos is purer than the order of society, which in turn is purer than the economic order, those who deal with the order of the cosmos are purer than those who deal with the order of society and the latter are purer than those who deal with economic order, and all who deal with order are purer than those who traffic in anti-order. Meanings in each order below the cosmic presuppose the meanings of the cosmic order, and the meanings of the economic order presuppose the meanings of the social order (cf. Dumont 1970:69, 72, 165). As suggested previously, each varṇa is identified with one of these orders. Diagram 10 illustrates this identification and the relations among orders.

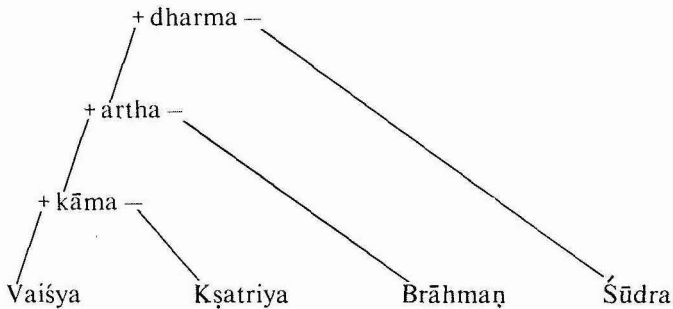


DIAGRAM 10. MINUS DHARMA = ADHARMA. It is worthy of note that this same hierarchic classification is used in classifying the four life stages (cf. Tyler 1973:92).

In the *jajmānī* system the relations between varṇas, with the exception of the *Śūdra*, are directly derived from the kind of order (*dharma*, *artha*, *kāma*) characteristic of each varṇa. Thus, what the *Vaiśya* has to give is some economic good, the *Kṣatriya* political power, and the *Brāhmaṇ* religious authority. Save his labor, which must be directed by the twice-born varṇas, the *Śūdra* contributes nothing to order. In fact, he must always be controlled and subjugated because he stands for anti-order. Like the demons whom he symbolizes, his power to create disorder must be yoked and made to serve the ends of legitimate order. Just as the demons and disorder

are the logical counterparts of deities and order, the Śūdra is the functional counterpart of the twice-born varnas.

#### THE GENERATION OF HOMOLOGICAL STRUCTURES

Turning now to the question of individual jātis, I argue that, although it is theoretically possible to change the varṇa categories by increasing or decreasing their number and by adding or subtracting the necessary attributional criteria for each category added or deleted, this is not the kind of change that is typical. Both ethnographically for actual jāti groups and as a historic cognitive model, the trend has been toward expansion, but expansion only at the terminal nodes, not at the level of the attributes which define the four major classes. We thus face the same problem as the ancient Śāstric authors: "how do we get more than four classes out of this system?" and we resolve the question in precisely the same way: by expanding terminal nodes.<sup>5</sup> To clarify the point, it is quite obvious that the system of logical oppositions in a semantic tree will generate as many distinct classes as we want, so long as the number of attributes is one less than the number of classes, but this soon becomes cumbersome and confusing as it rapidly overtakes human memory. We want a system that combines the projective power of the semantic tree with the obvious mnemonic advantages of the four classes defined by easily accessible attributes. One way to do this is to expand the terminal nodes, but to expand them on exactly the same principles as those on which the original structure is founded. Each nodal expansion then is simply a homomorphism of the original four-class structure. This expansion is represented in diagram 11 (p. 138).

Although I have used different attributes (a, b, c, d) in the lower half of diagram 11, that is not necessary; some of the same attributes (e.g., y and z) could be used recursively. The important point is that so long as each expansion is based on the logic of the underlying form, that is, is a model of the original, each will simply repeat the structure of the original *ad infinitum*. Each is a homology of the original cognitive model. Similarly, I have represented subcategorization in the nodal expansion as what I call a *strict hierarchy*, that is, a tree diagram that permits only left-hand branching, but subcategorization at the jāti level commonly permits both left- and right-hand branching. Note that the expansion of C itself is a case of right-hand branching. Right-hand branching has no effect on hierarchy; it simply allows for a greater proliferation of ranked subcategories.

In the Śāstric literature the mechanism for this expansion was intermarriage between the original four varṇas, and even though such varṇa intermarriage was generally discouraged, all of the Śāstric texts agree in a hierarchical classification of marriages as primary, involving marriage of persons belonging to the same varṇa, and secondary, involving marriage of

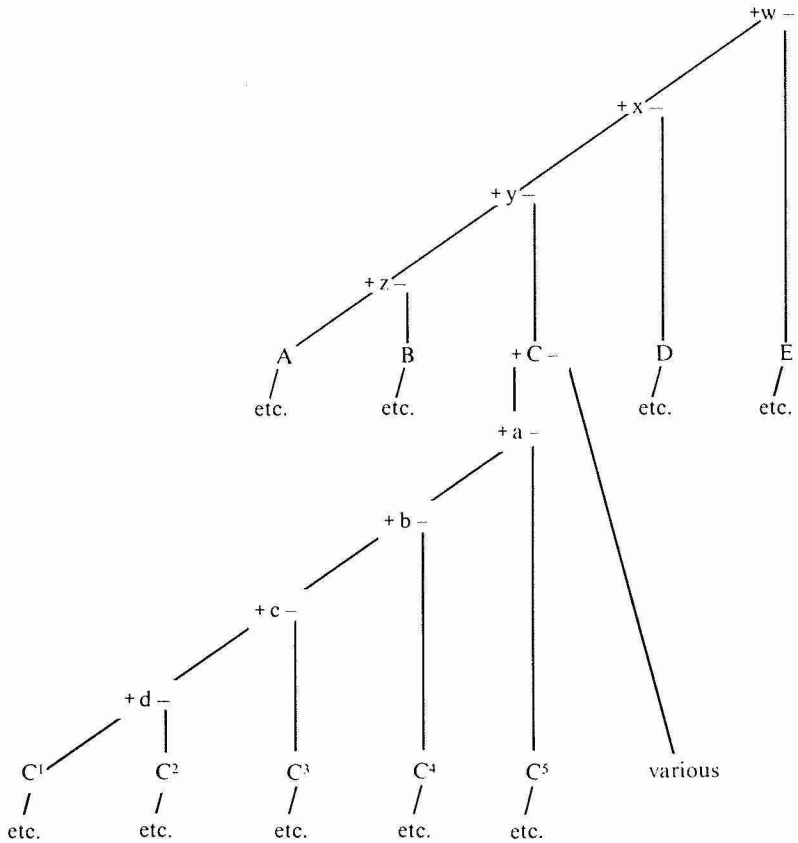


DIAGRAM 11. EXPANSION OF TERMINAL NODES.

persons belonging to different varṇas. Secondary marriages are further subdivided into two types: anuloma (“with the hair”), where the husband’s varṇa is higher than the wife’s; and pratiloma (“against the hair”), where the wife’s status is higher than the husband’s. This classification is illustrated in diagram 12.

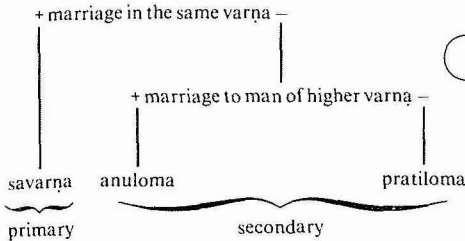


DIAGRAM 12. HIERARCHIC CLASSIFICATION OF MARRIAGES. The order of hierarchic rank is from left to right.

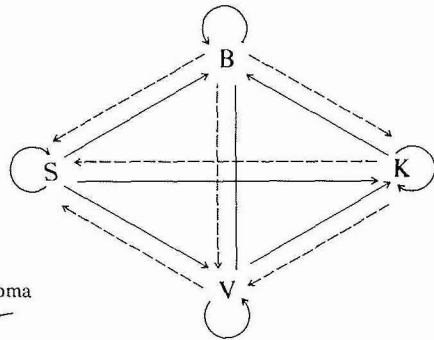


DIAGRAM 13. CAYLEY DIAGRAM OF MARRIAGE EXCHANGE. Primary marriages are designated by looped arrows originating and terminating at the same alphabetical letter. Secondary marriages are designated by straight arrows. Broken arrows indicate pratiloma (inverse order) and solid arrows indicate anuloma (proper order) marriages.

Although Śāstric authorities differ on the definition of *savarṇa*, some designating marriage between immediately adjacent twice-born varṇas as *savarṇa*, others restricting the designation only to marriage between persons of the same varṇa, and still others allowing it to include marriages between Brāhmaṇ and Kṣatriya, but not between Kṣatriya and Vaiśya, the prejudice is still in favor of primary marriage only between persons belonging to the same varṇa. In general then, the system of marital exchange entailed by this classification is represented in diagram 13.

In the Śāstras, intermarriage between persons of different varṇas inevitably produces new varṇa (*jāti*) categories. Gautama (IV, 16-18, Bühler 1879: 194-195), for example, derives the twelve additional groups given in diagram 14 from varṇa intermarriage.

In diagram 14, those above the diagonal are the result of marriages in the "inverse order" (*pratiloma*), that is, offspring of couples in which the wife's status is higher than the husband's; such offspring are degraded and are outside the pale of law. Those below the diagonal are mixed, but in the proper order—the husband's status is higher than the wife's. It can be demonstrated that by this one simple expedient of varṇa intermarriage the Śāstric authors proposed a mechanism that could generate subcategories infinitely. In order to simplify, I will state the rules in axiomatic form as follows:


		♂			
					
		B	K	V	S
♀	B	1 Brāhmaṇ	11 Sūta	13 Kṣattri	16 Cāṇḍāla
	K	2 Savaṇṇa	3 Kṣatriya	12 Māghadha	15 Vaideha
	V	8 Niṣāda	4 Ambaṣṭha	5 Vaiśya	14 Āyogava
	S	10 Pāraśava	9 Dauśyanta	6 Ugra	7 Śūdra

DIAGRAM 14. VARṆA INTERMARRIAGE AFTER GAUTAMA. Numerals in upper right-hand corners denote rank as assigned by converse 1A below. For a different interpretation, see Baudhāyana (1, 9, 17; Bühler 1882:197-198).

AXIOM 1: Offspring of parents belonging to the same group (or equally ranked groups) are assigned membership in their parents' group and the rank of their parents' group.

This simply means that the child of Brāhmaṇ parents, for example, is a Brāhmaṇ. This rule has the effect of preserving the order of the original four varṇas, but does not generate new groups.

CONVERSE 1: Offspring of parents belonging to two different (unequally ranked) groups constitute a group different from either of their parents' groups.

It is actually this converse of the normal rule of marriage that provides the generative power of the system. Each inter-varṇa marriage produces a new jāti category. This is demonstrated in diagram 15.

Where the offspring of parents belonging to different groups are assigned membership in unique groups, such intermarriage has the capability of producing infinitely many new groups. Although diagram 15 illustrates this point, it is somewhat inaccurate in that it neither reflects a particular pattern of constraints on varṇa intermarriage nor indicates how new varṇas are integrated into the ranking system. It only generates new groups, but

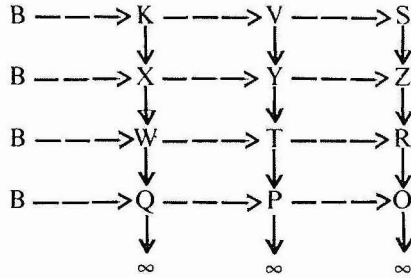


DIAGRAM 15. GENERATION OF NEW JĀTIS BY INTERVARṆA AND INTERJĀTI MARRIAGE. Broken arrow indicates marriage, solid arrow indicates descent. Thus, for example, the offspring of B and K is X. This axiom is widely represented in Australian marriage systems which, however, do not produce new groups infinitely because the groups repeat in cycles of various length.

does not preserve ranking. This suggests that the converse of axiom 1 should be restated in some way that would reflect both of these features.

CONVERSE 1A: Offspring of parents belonging to adjacently ranked groups are assigned membership in groups ranked higher than their mother's group and lower than their father's group.

This is illustrated in diagram 16.

Not surprisingly, the pattern of marriage in diagram 16 is consistent with an improbable marriage rule: cross cousin marriage for males of new categories and females of old categories, but with parallel cousin marriage for males of old categories and females of new categories. But it need not be interpreted in this way. All marriages are in the proper direction—husbands are higher status than wives, and each successor varṇa is assigned a rank higher than its female predecessor and lower than its male predecessor.

For completeness, converse 1A implies:

CONVERSE 1B: Offspring of parents belonging to non-adjacently ranked groups are assigned membership in groups ranked lower than either of their parents' groups.

And finally:

AXIOM 2: Offspring whose mother's group rank is higher than the father's group rank are assigned membership in groups ranked lower than either parent's groups and lower than offspring whose father's group rank is higher than the mother's group rank.

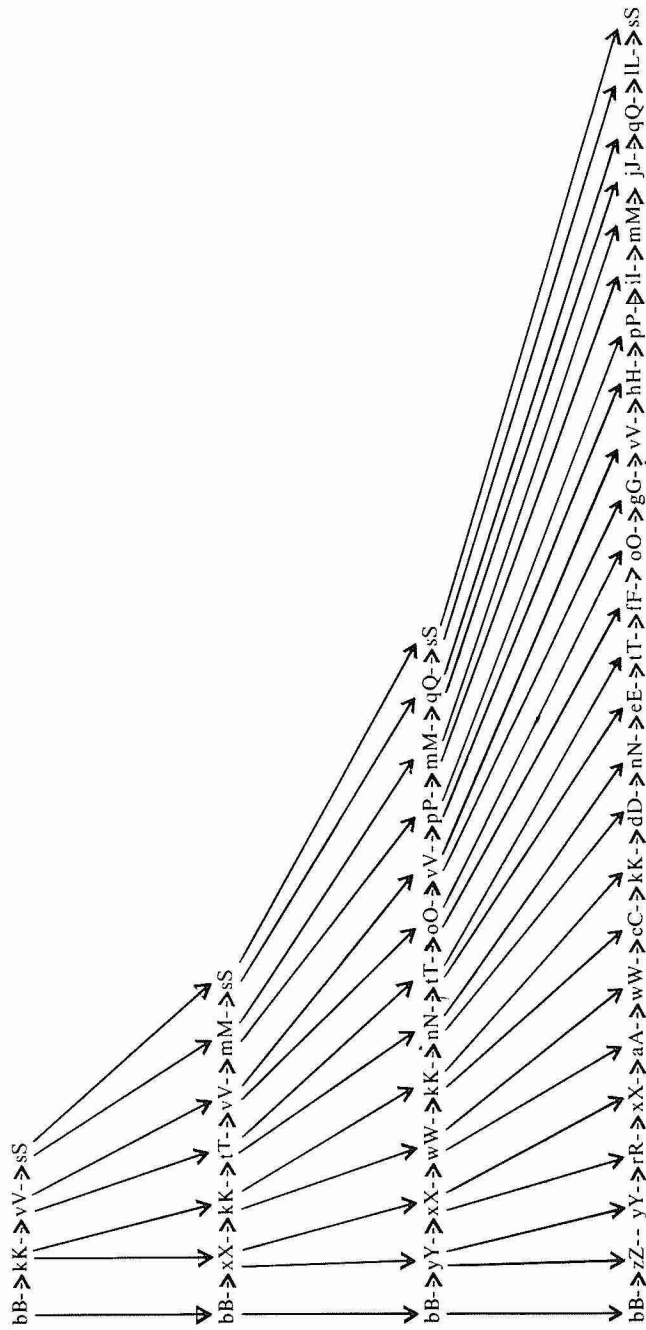


DIAGRAM 16. GENERATION OF NEW VARṆA GROUPS through varṇa intermarriage with assignment of appropriate rank for each group in each succeeding generation. ->- indicates marriage, ↓ indicates descent. Marriage within the same group is shown by juxtaposition (e.g., bB) not by ->-, although descent from such marriages is indicated by the arrows ↓ connecting letters of the same value. Capital letters designate males, lower case letters designate females. Patrilineal descent is assumed. Rank is from left to right. To illustrate, the first line is read as: a B female marries a B male (bB) and their children are bB; a B male marries a k female (B- → k) and their children are xX, and so on.



It is to be emphasized that the generation of new *jāti* categories through *varṇa* intermarriage has precisely the result predicated in diagram 11. Each terminal node is capable of infinite expansion by recursive operation of a single set of rules. Now it is not my argument that this model is ethnographically correct. In the first place, there are certain obvious demographic problematics inherent in the uppermost and lowest categories, but more importantly, I do not want to argue that *varṇa* intermarriage is *the* mechanism of *varṇa* or *jāti* proliferation. It is, of course, the *sign* of segmentation, not the cause of it. Secondly, variant patterns of *anuloma* marriages are amply documented both in the *Śāstric* texts and in ethnographic accounts. For example, examination of diagram 14 will quickly reveal that the marriage relations and relative rankings of that diagram do not entirely correspond with those of diagram 16. There are several reasons for this discrepancy. In the first place, the texts do not explicitly carry the proliferation of *varṇas* from the intermarriage of adjacent *varṇas* beyond one degree of intermarriage. They are more concerned with the consequences of *pratiloma* marriage and intermarriage between non-adjacent *varṇas* which are not shown in diagram 16. To understand the rankings generated by diagram 16, we must amend the original classification of marriages (diagram 12). We must separate marriage between adjacent *varṇas* (cf. converse 1A) from marriage between non-adjacent *varṇas* (cf. converse

		marriage in same <i>varṇa</i>		marriage in different <i>varṇa</i>	
				marriage to man of higher <i>varṇa</i>	marriage to man of lower <i>varṇa</i>
		savarṇa	anuloma	pratiloma	
adjacent	$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} + \\ \\ - \end{array} \right.$	$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} 1 \\ \\ 2 \end{array} \right.$	Bb, Kk, Vv, Ss	Bk, Kv, Vs	Kb, Vk, Sv
			Bv, Ks		Vb, Sk
			Bs		Sb

DIAGRAM 17. PARADIGM OF *JĀTIS* CREATED BY MARRIAGE TYPES. Capital letters indicate males, lower case letters indicate females. B = Brāhmaṇ, K = Kṣatriya, V = Vaiśya, S = Śūdra. Conjunction of letters indicates intermarriage. Thus Bk denotes marriage of a Brāhmaṇ male with a Kṣatriya female.

2A), and the latter from pratiloma marriages. The classification of marriages then is: marriage in the same varṇa; marriage of a female with a man of the higher adjacent varṇa; marriage of a female with a man of a higher non-adjacent varṇa, one or two degrees of adjacency removed; and finally, pratiloma marriages which are in turn divided into adjacent, non-adjacent, and two degrees of non-adjacency. Diagram 17 illustrates the relations between these categorizations of marriages, and the jātis created by each marriage type.

The ranking of jātis is *not* immediately evident from diagram 17, but may be "keyed out" with the key illustrated in diagram 18.<sup>6</sup>

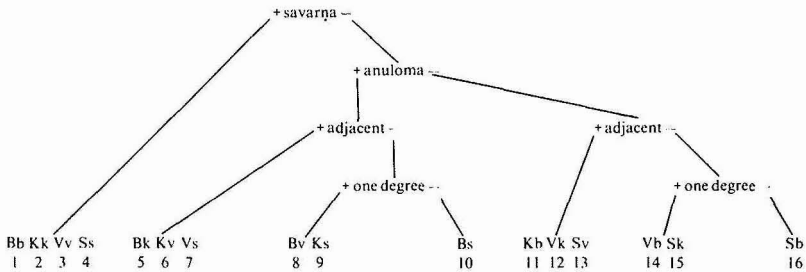


DIAGRAM 18. KEY DIAGRAM OF JĀTI RANKS CREATED BY MARRIAGE TYPES. Ranking is from left to right. Capital letters indicate males, lower case letters females.

This classification captures the following notions: (1) offspring of savarṇa marriages should retain the rank of their parents, and should rank higher than offspring of anuloma marriages; (2) offspring of anuloma marriages among adjacent varṇas should rank higher than offspring of anuloma marriages among non-adjacent varṇas; (3) anuloma offspring of higher ranked adjacent varṇas should be higher than anuloma offspring of lower ranked adjacent varṇas; (4) anuloma offspring of non-adjacent varṇas are ranked by degree of non-adjacency, those having the same degree of non-adjacency being ranked among one another in terms of the relative ranks of their parent varṇas; (5) offspring of all anuloma marriages are ranked higher than offspring of pratiloma marriages; (6) offspring of pratiloma marriages rank among themselves on the basis of the same principles (i.e., 2-4) as those governing ranking among the offspring of anuloma marriages.

By contrast, the rules underlying diagram 16 indicate that the rankings

derived from marriage with adjacent varṇas are given by the following rules: (1) a new jāti created by the intermarriage of adjacently ranked varṇas is given a rank equivalent to the rank of its "mother's" varṇa plus the number of new and old jātis previously generated by intermarriage of all higher ranking varṇas and jātis. (2) The rank of an "old" jāti resulting from intermarriage in the same varṇa is its original rank plus the number of new and old jātis previously generated by the intermarriage of all higher ranking varṇas and jātis. To clarify: Let I = number of new varṇas, R = original rank of a varṇa (where Brāhmaṇ = 1, Kṣatriya = 2, Vaiśya = 3, Śūdra = 4), then  $I + R$  for marriage within the same varṇa produces the following rankings.

<u>I</u>	<u>R</u>		<u>I + R</u>
0	1	=	1
1	2	=	3
2	3	=	5
3	4	=	7

For intermarriage with adjacent varṇas where R = rank of the "mother" varṇa, we have the following:

<u>I</u>	<u>R</u>		<u>I + R</u>
0	2	=	2
1	3	=	4
2	4	=	6

Rankings beyond 7 in diagram 18 are the result of intermarriage between non-adjacent varṇas and are derived from the following rule: new varṇas generated by intermarriage between non-adjacent varṇas are assigned the rank of their "father's" varṇa plus the total number of varṇas previously created through marriage within the same varṇa and with adjacent varṇas. Thus, intermarriage of a Brāhmaṇ and a Vaiśya, is 1 (the Brāhmaṇ's rank) plus 7 (the number of original varṇas plus the number of new jātis created through intermarriage) for a total and ranking of 8. Diagram 14 carries out rankings for both anuloma and pratiloma marriages only to 10. In a very general way, ranking of new varṇas is a function of the rank of intermarrying varṇas, and the number and rank of other varṇas.

Now the problem here is that the rankings produced by diagram 18 do not agree with the rankings produced by diagram 16. On the one hand, diagram 18 preserves the relative ranks of the original varṇa groups, and ranks all other groups in terms of the kind of intermarriage that produced them. But on the other hand, diagram 16 does not preserve the relative ranks of the original four varṇas, treating the offspring of savarṇa marriages as if they were the result of anuloma marriages. The rules of diagram 16 have the effect of degrading every original varṇa category except the Brāhmaṇ, and penalizing marriage in the same varṇa. In contrast, the rules underlying diagram 18 have the effect of ranking the Śūdra varṇa higher than a Brāhmaṇ or Kṣatriya jāti. The fact at issue is that axiom 1, which preserves original varṇa rank, and converse 1A, which does not preserve original varṇa rank, contradict one another. One way around this difficulty lies in exploiting the ambiguity of the concepts varṇa and jāti. Thus categories beyond the first four varṇas are interpreted as jātis and as subclasses of the original varṇas. To put it differently, only the rank of jātis is affected by anuloma marriage, not the rank of varṇas. The varṇas are fixed ideological constants, but the jātis are inconstant and variable, their variability explainable as departures from the rule requiring marriage within the same jāti.

Another device is to place different constraints on the ranking of groups springing from anuloma marriage. Thus, both the texts and contemporary jātis employ rules assigning offspring of anuloma marriage either to the father's jāti or to the mother's jāti, rather than assigning them to totally new jātis. For example, it is well known that jāti intermarriage in Kerala follows some such degenerative axiom as:

AXIOM 3: Offspring of any two adjacently ranked groups are assigned membership in the lower status group (i.e., the mother's group).

This is illustrated in diagram 19.

Also well attested in both texts and ethnographic accounts is the fact that something like the ameliorative converse of this axiom is illustrative of North Indian marriage patterns. Thus:

CONVERSE 2: Offspring of any two adjacently ranked groups are assigned membership in the higher status group (i.e., the father's group).

This is illustrated in diagram 20.

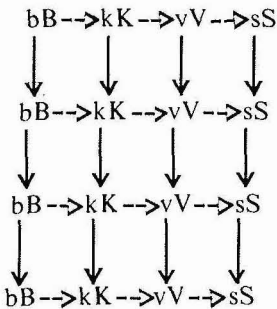


DIAGRAM 19. OFFSPRING ASSIGNED TO LOWER STATUS. This marriage rule is consistent with matrilineal descent and cross-cousin marriage.

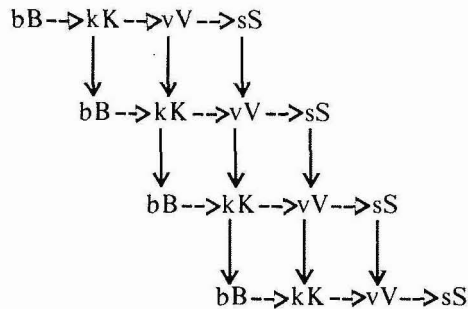


DIAGRAM 20. OFFSPRING ASSIGNED TO HIGHER STATUS GROUP. This marriage rule is consistent with patrilineal descent and cross-cousin marriage.

Again, these models encounter demographic difficulties (as do some of the people whose behavior they model), but it should be noted that they are both conservative rather than generative. They do not create new groups from intergroup marriages. They maintain both the number of groups and their relative ranks. Thus, because both *savarna* and *anuloma* marriages conforming to axiom 3 and converse 2 conserve the social order, we can now understand why the definition of *savarna* was so variable. If a marriage maintained relative ranking it was *savarna*.

But it will be noted that marriages corresponding to those of diagrams 19 and 20 preserve the status quo only at the price of inability to generate new *jāti* categories. This leaves the function of generating new *jāti*s to non-adjacent and *pratiloma* marriages. The generative capacity of the former, however, is not unlimited. In the case of *anuloma* marriages between non-adjacent *varṇas*, Manu (X. 64-65, Bühler 1886:416-417 ff.) allows that their offspring can be elevated to the status of *Brāhmaṇs* by continued intermarriage with *Brāhmaṇs* through seven generations. Similar ameliorative rules appear in *Āpastamba* (11, 5, 10-11, Bühler 1879:125) and *Gautama* (IV 22-24, Bühler 1879:196-197 ff.). In *Gautama*'s interpretation, the seven generation rule seems to apply only to cases of intermarriage between adjacent *varṇas*, but the more general case is for this or a similar rule to apply to all varieties of *varṇa* intermarriage. Two other variant interpretations are worthy of note. In one, the commentators interpret the rule as applying to repeated intermarriage between worthy persons of the same *varṇa*. Thus, if an excellent *Pāraśava* man marries an excellent *Pāraśava* female and his descendants do likewise for seven generations the offspring

in the seventh generation will be Brāhmaṇs. In another interpretation (Manu X. 65 ff.), the number of generations required to effect a transformation in the status of a varṇa or jāti is greater for lower-ranking groups and lesser for higher-ranking ones. While the offspring of a Brāhmaṇ and a Śūdra (i.e., a Pāraśava) attains the rank of a Brāhmaṇ through repeated Brāhmaṇ intermarriages in the seventh generation, the offspring of a Brāhmaṇ and Kṣatriya (i.e., a Savaṇṇa) attains Brāhmaṇ rank in the third generation, and those of a Brāhmaṇ and a Vaiśya (i.e., a Niṣāda) in the fifth generation.

It is tempting to interpret all of these rules as *cyclic permutations* of period 7 (cf. Budden 1972:106-130). Thus, if the operator X is interpreted as the repeated marriage of a Brāhmaṇ with the six varṇas (indicated by the numerals 1-6) created by anuloma marriage, then:

$$X = \begin{pmatrix} 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & 5 & 6 \\ 2 & 3 & 4 & 5 & 6 & 1 \\ 3 & 4 & 5 & 6 & 1 & 2 \\ 4 & 5 & 6 & 1 & 2 & 3 \\ 5 & 6 & 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 \\ 6 & 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & 5 \end{pmatrix}$$

In the seventh permutation the proper order is restored. But, because this permutation implies that "the first shall be last," it does not correspond with the marriage rules. That is, if these groups are ranked, there is no condition allowing for the varṇa designated by the numeral 1, for example, to be ranked last as it is in the second row above. We more nearly approximate the situation if we let the names of anuloma varṇas appearing in diagram 14 be represented by the initial letters of their respective names, their relative rank given by left to right order, and conceive of each repeated Brāhmaṇ marriage as having the effect of moving a varṇa up one rank in the hierarchy as indicated in diagram 21.

It will be observed that a Pāraśava (P) in diagram 21 attains the rank of a Brāhmaṇ (B) in the seventh generation, a Niṣāda (N) in five generations, but a Savaṇṇa (S) requires only one generation rather than the three assigned by Manu's rule. Despite this inconsistency and the distinct probability that the numerals three, five, and seven have purely magical significance, it is my argument that a model of this sort underlies all these ideas of status amelioration through hierarchic marriage. Each intermarriage in

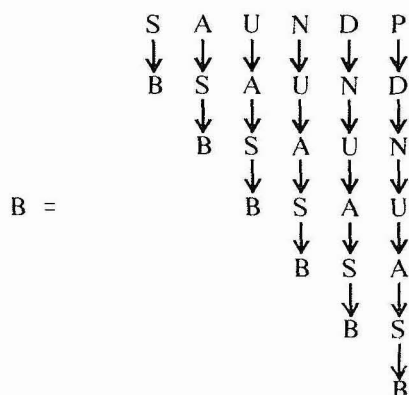


DIAGRAM 21. REPEATED BRĀHMAṆ (B) INTERMARRIAGE WITH VARṆAS CREATED BY ANULOMA MARRIAGES.

the sequence produces offspring of a differing rank (e.g., Bp → D). It may seem a curious inconsistency to argue on the one hand that intermarriage both creates and destroys new jāti groups, but it is important to point out that a kind of equilibrium is the result, and that this pulsating character of social order with its consequent equilibrium exactly parallels the Indian conception of cosmic order. We shall return to this point subsequently.

It is obvious that the ameliorative rules operating on a finite set of groups will ultimately reduce all differentiated groups to a single group, and it is equally obvious that the anuloma rules that generate new groups will generate groups infinitely, but if both sets of rules are taken in conjunction with one another, the result is equilibrium. Assume, for example, that instead of allowing groups to become extinct by ameliorative rules as in diagram 21, we allow each extinguished group to be replaced by an anuloma marriage. The result is a group structure broadly similar to musical rounds, as illustrated in diagram 22.

There are, of course, certain problems with this method of representation since it does not indicate how groups S-P are created in each generation through anuloma marriage, but the main point concerning equilibrium is unaffected. Diagram 22 makes clear the possibility of constant movement within a fixed structure. Groups constantly move up and down the scale of varṇa ranks, but this endless movement neither generates structural change through the permutation of groups nor changes the fact of hierarchic ranking itself. *The effect of these rules is to produce both change and permanence.* In the order of society they are the analogs of creation and destruction in the cosmic order.

On this point it is instructive to compare the effect of these Indian rules with, for example, the effect of the Murngin marriage rules. Weil, in the





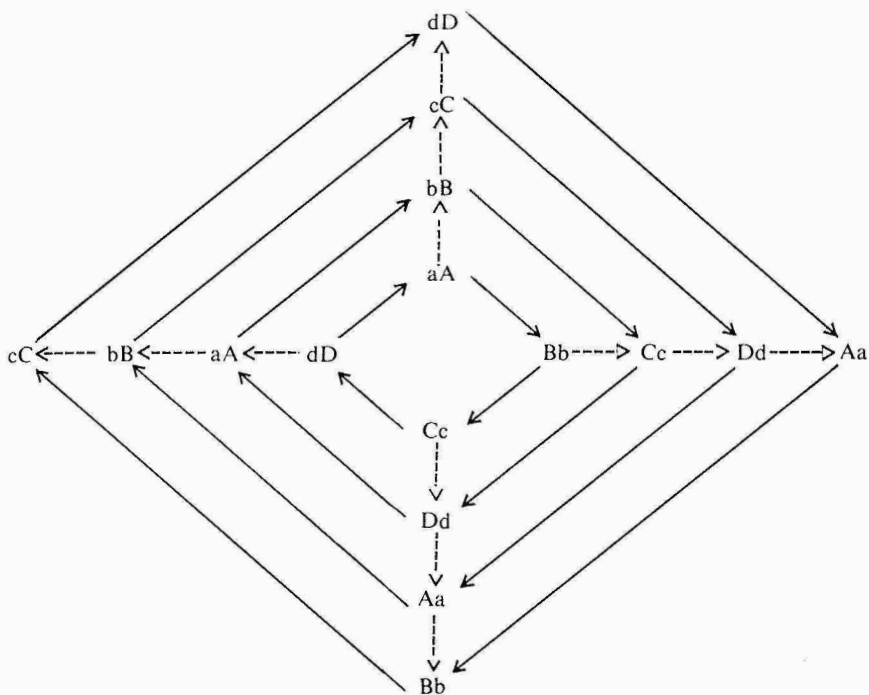


DIAGRAM 23. MARRIAGE RELATIONS IN A SYSTEM OF GENERALIZED EXCHANGE. Upper case letters indicate male, lower case female. Solid arrows indicate marriage, broken arrows descent. Thus the children of an A man and a b woman are Cc.

Each permutation can be read directly from diagram 23 by reading out from the center along the broken arrows. Thus, starting from A (aA) we have A, B, C, D, and moving clockwise in the direction of the solid marriage arrows to B (Bb) we have B, C, D, A, and so on. The original order A, B, C, D is restored in the fifth cycle. Clearly, this structure merely repeats itself endlessly. In comparison, the Indian marriage rules seem to imply a much more open and variable system capable of change and development, but, as we have just seen, the ameliorative rules and the generative rules cancel one another out. The net effect of generating and incorporating new groups, changes in their relations, their movement up and down in rank, is nil. They entail no change in structure and we see that the Indian rules conserve structure just as surely as the Murngin or Kariëra rules. It is of paramount importance, of course, that the Indian theorists, like their

Australian and French confrères, should have seen the analogy between the exchange of women and the question of order, but it is in their effort to accommodate change and development to the fixed structure of hierarchy that the Indian theorists differ most significantly not only from the Australians, but from most others as well.<sup>7</sup> It is necessary to observe that this accommodation between change and permanence is successful only because it accords a superior place to permanence, making change understandable only insofar as it exemplifies a deterministic order consistent with the principles of an immutable hierarchic structure. Thus the varṇas are fixed, immutable categories of which the jātis are variable and inconstant reflections, but their variability is understandable because it theoretically never produces a pattern inconsistent with the original hierarchy.<sup>8</sup> This is reminiscent of Aristotle's assignment of epistemic priority to the Species. Because it is immutable, the Species is the essential form, the object and source of philosophy. Individual men may come and go; the Species is always the same. Determinism is the goal of all quests for the natural laws governing the cosmos. But if this is the case, then change, evolution, development become problematic either because they are technically impossible—their effect neutralized because they can only endlessly reproduce the same structure—or, if they are possible only as a conceptual category, they are unaccounted for. Consequently, we are wrong to argue that the Indian and Murngin systems are substantially different in character since both fail, albeit in different ways, to grow beyond a predetermined, fixed structure. As in contemporary science, an infinitely expanding universe is possible only if its expansion preserves structure. There remains, however, the problem of pratiloma marriage.

If the generative capacity of anuloma marriage is negated by the operation of ameliorative rules, then only pratiloma marriages produce new jātis—jātis whose status cannot be ameliorated by intermarriage with high-ranking varṇas or jātis, and more importantly, whose existence threatens the right order of hierarchic precedence either because their position is ambiguous or potentially competitive. Here too, we should note that there is no readily apparent way to integrate these new jātis into the system of economic exchange.<sup>9</sup>

All of the texts agree that pratiloma marriages create "confusion of jātis" or overturn the established order of varṇas, and they are unanimous in enjoining all to avoid pratiloma unions. Since pratiloma marriages produce a ranking that operates on the same principles as anuloma marriages, it is at first difficult to see why they incur such aversion. The reason is that pratiloma marriages create new categories whose position in the hierarchy is potentially competitive with the normal hierarchic order. Consider diagram 24.

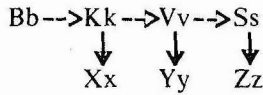


DIAGRAM 24. PRATILOMA MARRIAGE.

Now there is nothing in diagram 24, or in the marriage rule that generates it (converse 1) that automatically determines the rank of X, Y, Z either with respect to one another or to B, K, V, S. Their position in the hierarchy is ambiguous. On the other hand, in a pratiloma marriage the ranking generated by converse 1A should be:  $S > Z > V > Y > K > X > B$  (where  $>$  is transitive and designates "is higher than"), which has the disturbing effect of completely inverting the original hierarchy! This result may not be immediately self-evident. The reasoning is as follows: if a child is assigned a group ranking higher than his mother's and X is a child of b and K then  $X > B$ , and if a child is assigned a group ranking lower than his father's and X is a child of K then  $K > X$ , and if  $K > X$  and  $X > B$  then  $K > B$  and so on. Because pratiloma marriages thus forebode inversion of the established order, it is small wonder that they were calumniated and the progeny of such unions thought to be so degraded that they were outside the law.

Since the progeny of pratiloma unions are considered to be outside the law, it is tempting to see the contrast between pratiloma and savarna/anuloma as an underlying contrast between *order* and *chaos*, but because chaos implies the absence of order, this is not the appropriate contrast. A contrast is involved here between the *right* order (dharma) and the *wrong* order (adharma), or more simply order and anti-order. It is the contrast between righteousness and unrighteousness symbolized on the one hand by the deities and on the other by the demons. Pratiloma marriages thus symbolize the demoniacal, and evil not only exists, it has a structure.<sup>10</sup>

If dharma and adharma simply indicate evaluations of different orders, rather than order versus the absence of order, there is still a question about what concept might indicate the sense of chaos as the absence of order. I argue here that the contrast between dharma and adharma, as well as between anuloma and pratiloma, derives from a higher order contrast which entails not so much a contrast between order and chaos in the sense of the latter as absence of order, but rather a contrast between states of affairs in which questions of order are appropriate and states of affairs in which questions of order are inappropriate. This contrast refers to a dualistic conception of the universe as being composed of active (prakṛti) and passive or quiescent (puruṣa) components and states. If the universe is in an active state or if a question refers to the activity of the universe, then questions of order are relevant, otherwise not. That is to say, prakṛti is a necessary presupposition to any question about dharma. The concept corresponding to the condition in which questions of order are irrelevant is

mokṣa (liberation). As order (dharma) corresponds to the active state, the irrelevance of order (mokṣa) corresponds to the passive state. This is illustrated in diagram 25.

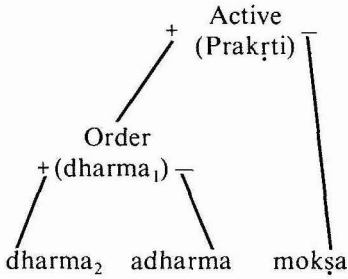


DIAGRAM 25. CATEGORIZATION OF ORDER.  
Dharma<sub>1</sub> indicates the sense of dharma  
as order, dharma<sub>2</sub> as *right* order.

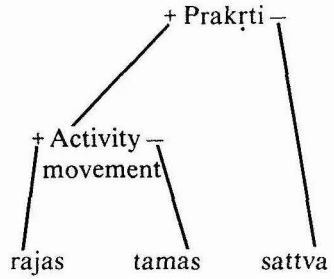


DIAGRAM 26. RELATION OF GUṆA CATEGORIES.

In general then, savarṇa/anuloma marriages are marriages according to dharma<sub>2</sub> and pratiloma marriages are marriages according to adharma. Both savarṇa/anuloma and pratiloma are ordered (dharma<sub>1</sub>), the latter being the inverse of the former.

We are now in a position to understand why savarṇa/anuloma marriages are better than pratiloma marriages, but one other question remains unclear. Why is it possible for a child to be ranked higher than his mother, but not possible for a child to be ranked higher than his father? In part the answer has to do with the general idea that male seed is superior to the field in which it is sown (Manu X. 69-72, Bühler 1886:418). The male thus contributes more than the female in the sense that his contribution is more determinative of the outcome. A theory is involved, then, about the relative heritability of qualities from each of a child's parents. Here I argue that the theory of heritability of qualities has ultimate reference to the concept that all things in the universe consist of three strands of qualities known as guṇas, and that the character of anything is determined by its particular guṇa make-up. The three guṇas are rajas, tamas, and sattva. Rajas stands for activity, lightness, movement; tamas, the opposite of rajas, stands for inactivity, weight, inertia, darkness; and sattva, the opposite of rajas and tamas, stands for balance, equilibrium, purity. They are all subdivisions of prakṛti, but since rajas and tamas are capable of acting only when in disequilibrium, it is obvious that sattva is identified with puruṣa and mokṣa, and rajas and tamas with prakṛti and dharma. This is illustrated in diagram 26.

By analogic extension it is clear that with reference to marriage, anuloma marriages are characterized by excessive rajas guṇa, pratiloma by excessive tamas guṇa, and because they do not create movement of jātis, savarṇa

marriages are sattvic. With specific reference to the heritability of qualities, the analogical identities are rajas + tamas = female, and sattva = male.<sup>11</sup> Just as sattva guṇa dominates the other guṇas by keeping them in equilibrium, the male contribution to offspring dominates the female contribution, and since every child is the conjunction of these male and female elements there is no way that a child can be ranked higher than his father. The greater natural tendency is for degradation.

To sum up, puruṣa and prakṛti symbolize a whole series of fundamental antinomies in Indian thought. Puruṣa stands for equilibrium, passive potency, immutability, non-creation, mokṣa (non-order), pure uncreated being, the undifferentiated, non-formation, non-causality, timelessness: in a word, the real (Brāhmaṇ). In contrast, prakṛti is equivalent to disequilibrium, active power, mutability, creation, dharma (order), impure created existence, differentiation, transformation, the law of causality (karma), time: in a word, the unreal (māya). These oppositions are tabulated in diagram 27. Prakṛti is a kind of primitive Newtonian force, having positive and negative poles. So, just as the positive dharma (order) is opposed by the negative adharmā (anti-order), the gods are opposed by the demons, dvija by Śūdra, light by dark, Āryan civilization by aboriginal savagery, and in a sense, culture by nature. These oppositions are represented in diagram 28 (cf. Tyler 1973:94).

PURUṢA	PRAKṚTI
equilibrium	disequilibrium
passive potency	active power
immutability	mutability
non-creation	creation
mokṣa	dharma
pure being	impure existence
undifferentiation	differentiation
non-formation	transformation
non-causality	causality (karma)
timelessness	time
the real (Brāhmaṇ)	the unreal (māya)

DIAGRAM 27. FUNDAMENTAL OPPOSITIONS IN INDIAN THOUGHT.

PRAKṚTI	
<i>Positive</i>	<i>Negative</i>
dharma	adharma
gods	demons
rajas	tamas
twice-born	once-born
light	dark
Āryan	non-Āryan
culture	nature

DIAGRAM 28. POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE DIVISIONS OF PRAKṚTI.

Perhaps the discerning reader will have perceived the familiar structuralist triangle lurking in the background of this discussion. Thus we have diagram 29.

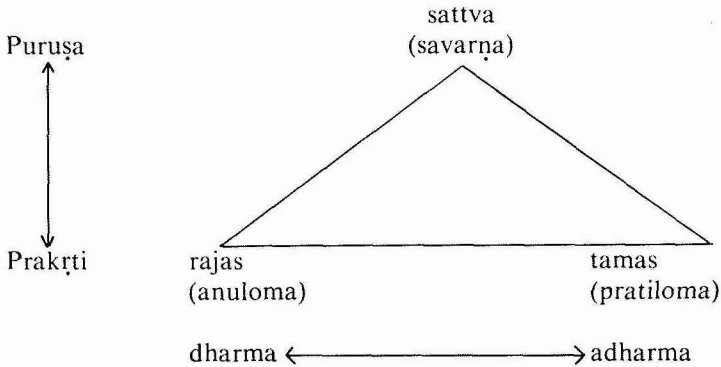


DIAGRAM 29. STRUCTURALIST TRIANGLE OF OPPOSITIONS.

To draw the contrast with Western thought, it remains only to point out that *puruṣa* is the good, *prakṛti* evil. In this scheme cosmogony as the narrative sequence of the origin and development of the universe is reduced to cosmology, a stable pattern of timeless concepts. Process succumbs to structure.

#### CONCLUSION

The Śāstric authors were faced with a dilemma. The sacred texts unanimously insisted on the division of society into four classes, but the world consisted of a great many more than four classes. Since the four classes were part of sacred authority, they could not simply be jettisoned; a way had to be found to reconcile the texts and the facts. The solution fastened upon was to derive the contemporary non-conforming classes (*jātis*) from the scriptural classes (*varṇas*) through the mechanism of class intermarriage, each intermarriage producing a new class. But there is more here than a simple question of the number of classes. The four *varṇas* of sacred authority are ranked, and that ranking reflects basic notions about morality and law, and entails other basic notions about politics and economics—it signifies, in short, the social order. The problem then is not just how to increase the number of classes, but how to increase them without destroying social order. In concrete terms, the overt question is: “how can rank be assigned to the new classes produced by *varṇa* intermarriage?” In more cosmic terms, the Śāstric authors asked the underlying question: “how can we simultaneously account for permanence and impermanence, persistence and change,

order and chaos?" Their answer to the latter was that there was an immutable macrocosmic order from which the mutable microcosm derived, and which it reflected. As Manu puts it, they constructed "a mutable universe from immutable ideas" (1.19, Jones 1796:3). This answer had the salutary effect of both vindicating the sacred texts and accounting for the world. As for the former question, the answers proposed were various in details, but more or less consistent in their general aims. There are two problems: assignment of group membership and assignment of group rank, and the aim is that both should be automatically determined by the kind of marriage.

By now it should be clear that the whole theory of marriage in the Śāstras is part of an immense homological structure whose ultimate categories have to do with cosmology and cosmogony. The Śāstric authors proceed by piling one homology on top of another, stretching the initial root metaphor of creation to cover more and more conceptual territory, gradually bringing every aspect of the universe into a coherent relation. Underlying this structure is a dominating system of archetypal concepts consisting of key words and symbols whose interconnections provide the ultimate source of structure and whose extensions through metaphoric processes create new structures. All ordered conceptual domains, whether of religion, science, literature, or myth, operate according to these processes of metaphoric representation. Scientists and other ideologues share the same ultimate monomaniacal aim—to bring more and more of the facts of the world under the control of a guiding analogy or metaphor. None has yet matched the coherence of the enormous homological structure erected by the Śāstric authors. It is both a tribute and a challenge to the human imagination.

If it is objected that the Indian solution to the problem of order and change is either incoherent or unpalatable because it contemplates a cosmic condition that is neither ordered nor disordered, a great emptiness that is yet the ultimate source of all things, consider the state of contemporary thought. Modern science encourages us to believe that certain isolated systems become progressively disordered and that certain isolated systems become progressively ordered. The concept of *entropy* thus calls for the development of disorder from order while *evolution* foresees order developing from disorder. Are we to conclude that these two produce equilibrium, or are they conveniently in complementary distribution throughout the universe? Did the universe originate in chaos or is that merely its terminus? If order emerges from chaos, does this not mean that the latter somehow contains and engenders the former and that we may speak of chaos as the fecund repository of order, as the sum of all orders, as that totality of order which is not itself an order, but merely the possibility of it? Must we too, then conclude that all possible orders coexist, that past, present, and future are only illusory refractions of the timeless present?

## NOTES

1. This paper contains some of the analysis behind portions of *India: An Anthropological Perspective* (Tyler 1973), which could not be included there because of its technical nature. Parts of this paper were presented in talks before the Anthropology Department of Southern Illinois University in March, 1973, and the Anthropology Department of Michigan State University in March, 1974. The research on which it is based was supported by nobody.

2. Śāstra denotes "science, instruction," and the Śāstric literature devoted to explanations of scriptures and sacrificial ritual. Śāstric literature and the commentaries on it began sometime in the second century A.D., and continue down to the present era.

3. That is, the set  $V$  is closed under the binary relation  $(*)$  "gives to"; "gives to" is associative; there is an identity element (each gives to himself in this case); each element has an inverse. Formally: a group is an ordered pair  $(G, *)$  such that it has closure  $= \forall x, y \in G \Rightarrow x*y \in G$ ; associativity  $= \forall x, y, z \in G (x*y)*z = x*(y*z)$ ; identity  $= \forall x \in G, \exists e \in G$  such that  $x*e = e*x = x$ ; inverse  $\forall x \in G, \exists y$  such that  $xy = yx = e$  (Budden 1972:73). Both closure and associativity seem incongruous in the case of "gives to." On closure for this relation, see Tyler (1973:164-165). Associativity is more complex and may not be demonstrable in this case.

4. The main point about homologies is that any homological mapping of elements from one set to another preserves the structural properties of the original set, but not the individuality of the elements. If the elements are mapped one-to-one, then their individuality is preserved and the relation between the two sets is isomorphic, involving perhaps nothing more than a change in the names of the elements.

5. The Śāstras also employ other means. There is, for example, a group of jātis referred to as Vṛātyas, formed not by intermarriage and nodal expansion, but by failure to perform Āryan sacrifices and to live according to the law. They are members of once high varṇas who have been degraded through their failure to fulfill the sacred obligations of their varṇa. Offspring produced by adultery committed by persons of different varṇas, improper marriages (including marriages with non-Āryans), and neglect of prescribed duties all give rise to a confusion of castes. All groups so created are vāhya (excluded from the community of Āryans), and they follow polluting occupations forbidden to the twice born (Manu X, 20-24, 46; Bühler 1886:405-407, 413). Because they are excluded, all may be referred to as Dasyus (slaves, aboriginals). How groups created by these processes constituted themselves as social groups is as obscure in the texts as it is in my diagrams. We can only assume that that which is intended is as feasible as any other analysis calling for group fission.

6. As Kay (1969) points out, a key is not a semantic arrangement. It is an arbitrary device for showing the distribution of equally arbitrary dichotomous contrasts over a set of lexemes. It can be used to represent other semantic structures, but is not itself a semantic structure.

7. On the importance of the notion of development or expansion in Indian mythology and philosophy, see Tyler (1973:72-73).

8. To put the matter formally: permutation of the rank order of varṇas B, K, V, S is not permissible, but permutation of jātis is. That is, there is no legitimate operator that would permute varṇa ranks as for example:

$$X = \begin{pmatrix} B & K & V & S \\ K & B & S & V \end{pmatrix}$$
, but there is an inadmissible operator (pratiloma marriage) which

could conceivably invert rank order. Thus:  $y = \begin{pmatrix} B & K & V & S \\ S & V & K & B \end{pmatrix}$ . Similarly, there are

operators (for example rules of commensality and connubiality, economic power, and numerical preponderance) which have the effect of permuting jāti ranks, but this would not affect varṇa ranks.



9. Although the verse is not clear, Manu X, 41 (Bühler 1886:412), says that six sons begotten on women of equal and the next lower castes (anantara) have the duties of the twice-born. All others have duties equal to Śūdras. The verse is not clear because the six sons seem to refer to all the anulomas produced by intervarṇa marriage, but the phrase "next lower" implies only anulomas who are produced by intermarriage of adjacent varṇas. It is to be noted that in Manu's system the latter would all be classed as savarṇa, and their status would therefore be unproblematic. In general, the context favors the interpretation that all anulomas have duties equivalent to the twice-born and all pratilomas have duties equivalent to Śūdras.

10. This contrast is also reflected in the eight-fold classification of marriages. See Tyler (n.d.).

11. Note that this identification confounds the putative cognitive universal cited by Osgood and Richards (1973:380-382, 409-411) which assigns *activity* or an *active* component to the male and places a positive value on this assignment. According to Osgood the semantic components *male* and *active* are all positively valued (good). In support of this universal he cites the Chinese case of Yin and Yang. By contrast, the Indian system neither values *activity* nor assigns it to the component *male*. In the Indian scheme, activity is bad, and is assigned to the component *female*. The systems agree only in assigning the valuation *bad* to the *female* component. For details, see Tyler (1973:70-73, 86, 90-94).

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